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**A SHORT
HISTORY OF CLENT.**

A SHORT
HISTORY OF CLENT.

BY

JOHN AMPHLETT, M.A., S.C.L.,

BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

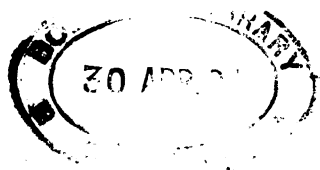
“Ille terrarum mihi praeter omnes
Angulus ridet.”—*Horace*.

Parker and Co.

6 SOUTHAMPTON-STREET, STRAND, LONDON;
AND BROAD-STREET, OXFORD.

1890.

Gough Add: Worcester S. 58.



*Clent, Stourbridge,
November, 1890.*

DEAR VISCOUNT COBHAM,

While I have had no small pleasure in collecting the materials for this little History, I have still greater pleasure in dedicating the result to you. From the long connection of your family with the manor, and from your neighbourly interest in the parish, I confidently trust that it will not be without value to you.

Yours very truly,

JOHN AMPHLETT.

PREFACE.

THE object of this little book is to place on record all that is at present known by its author of the History of Clent. There is much yet to be discovered from further examination of the Public Records and other sources of information, but to wait for completeness would be to wait for ever.

Considerable use has been made of the William Salt Society's *Staffordshire Collections*. It is greatly to be hoped that some day a Society will be founded to do for Worcestershire what this is doing for a neighbouring county. The history of Worcestershire will never be worthily re-written till such is the case. To Lord Cobham's kindness is owing an inspection of the Court Rolls of the Manor; and a book of this character cannot be compiled without frequent reference to the works of Messrs. Stubbs, Freeman, and Rogers.

But for the most valuable portion of the book, the examination of the Legend of St. Kenelm, the author is indebted to Mr. James Parker, of Oxford: through whom he is able to give an

abbreviated translation of the whole legend as found in the earliest manuscripts, and also the Latin hymn in praise of St. Kenelm, which is of very early date, and which, it is believed, has never before been printed. Owing also to Mr. Parker's kind assistance, the earlier chapters have gained much in completeness and accuracy.

The list given in Nash's *History of Worcestershire* has been depended upon for the names of Incumbents of Clent found in the Registers of the Diocese. But this is certainly imperfect, additional names being found in the Parish Register; and it is probably inaccurate in some respects also. Further research in this direction is yet to be desired.

J. A.

CLENT, STOURBRIDGE,
Nov. 1890.

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ERRATA.

Page 6, line 22, *for* 821 *read* 796.
 „ 6, „ 23, „ 796 „ 821.

A Short History of Clent.

CHAPTER I.

CLENT BEFORE THE CONQUEST.

THAT place in England now called Clent must have had a history before it got possession of its present name. If Clent be a Danish word, it could not have become attached to the place before the coming of the Danes, who first penetrated to the centre of England about the year 870. How the site was named before their arrival there is no evidence to show; if it had a name in British times, perhaps it was called Pen, the Celtic word meaning head, and used to denominate any high land, an appellation which may survive in the present name of Pen Orchard Farm. The word Clent, however, does not now appear to well describe the locality it names. It is probably a form of the Danish and Swedish Clint, meaning hard or projecting crag or rock; and in the whole of the parish there is nothing of the kind, the hills, though lofty, being especially and entirely rounded in outline. Besides this, the name of the valley running up between the highest eminences seems equally a misnomer. It is called Clatterbach, which, unless we take Clatter to mean "gossip," when its application would appear void of reason, must denote the stream-vale of loose and shat-

B

tered stones, and nothing of the kind is visible on the smooth pasture of which the valley is composed ^a.

There is, of course, very little from which we can gather the history of Clent in these early times. It must have been an important as well as convenient place for a settlement, situated as it is at the edge of the broad Severn valley, and possessing in its limits the most commanding eminences in a long range of hills. Tradition, the mist out of which all history emerges, of parishes as well as of states, talks of a severe battle between the Romans and Britons, the former being encamped on Wychbury, the latter on Walton and Clent Hills, which was fought on Clent Heath, that part of the parish which now forms Thickenall Farm, and stretches from there down to Churchill. Harborough Hill close by, in its name seems to speak of armies, if we take the first syllable of the word to be the Saxon *Here*, a host. There were five tumuli on Clent Heath near to it, which were opened by Bishop Lyttelton more than a hundred years ago, and then pronounced to be Roman: in one of them was found a vase of coarse, ill-burnt clay filled with small human bones, while a considerable quantity of bones, burnt wood, and ashes were found in the others. But no accurate description of their contents is in existence, and they were probably British, not Roman.

An old road runs along the western end of the parish, also said to be Roman, but which may be British. Its course is clear for some five miles, during which it forms, for the most part of the way, the boundary of

^a Murray's *New English Dictionary*, s. vv. Clent, Clint, Clatter, and Bach.

either parish or county, thereby shewing that it is an ancient landmark. In places it is dug deep into the ground where some hill is encountered, but it has not the directness of a Roman road, nor are there any Roman remains in Clent, betokening permanent Roman habitation, though their armies may have encamped in the neighbourhood on Wychbury Hill, on Kinver Edge, and at Green's Forge.

It was in the fifth century that the English landed on the shores of Britain, and having overrun the country, some tribes settled along the east bank of the Severn. A long arm of the British kingdom of Strath Clyde stretched down from the north, and bounded the English territory to the east. At the close of the sixth century the kingdom of Mercia grew out of the consolidation of several smaller states, one of which was the country belonging to the Hwiccas, who dwelt on the east of the Severn, from Somersetshire to Shrewsbury, and to which tribe the people who inhabited Clent at that time belonged. Their district probably reached as far to the eastward as the low range of hills of which the Clent Hills form part, where the red sandstone gives way to the clay of the coal measures. On the sandstone the prevailing tree is the elm, on the stiffer clay the oak flourishes. The oak is a forest tree, while the elm is never found to any extent in woods, but is the tree of the open country^b. It is

^b It is said that the small-leaved elm, which seldom bears seed in England; but which flourishes in such luxuriance on the red sandstone of Worcestershire that it is called the "Worcestershire Weed," was not introduced till the time of the Crusades. But two villages in the county were called at the time of Domesday, Elmley, and one Elmerige, and at

probable that the country as far as the hills was open and grassy, the thickets being largely interspersed with glades of land fit for pasturage and agriculture. Moreover, the character of the country is disclosed to us by the great prevalence of the termination 'ley' in the names of places in the neighbourhood. Ley itself means an open glade in a wood, where agricultural and pastoral operations were possible. Up these glades the Saxons had pushed their way, settling here and there till they were stopped by the denser forests in front of them. The Clent Hills must then have been in much the same condition that they are now, bare, grass-grown summits covered on their sides with gorse. No trees grow naturally upon the higher parts of them; and though it is evident from the numerous old hedge-banks that traverse them in all directions that some portion of them was at one time cultivated, still there are many acres that have never felt the plough, and remain until now in a state of nature^c.

On the eastern side of the hills the British, protected by the woods, still held the country, and many British names still exist to shew the permanency of their occupation. At the northern end of the Sedgley hills is the village of Penn; and at the very highest part of Clent Hills is the farm called Pen Orchard, the former word shewing that it was an outpost of the British, and two of these places at all events the small-leaved elm is most abundant, there being very little of the broad-leaved or Wych-elm in the neighbourhood.

^c Oaks at one time grew on some portion of the hills. At a Manor Court held in 1520, the bailiff sold thirty-three oaks growing on them to certain inhabitants for 20s., and six more were given by the lady of the manor to repair Clent Church.

the latter probably a corruption of some British word of similar sound, though of a very different meaning.

Of the Hwiccas, the large majority were Saxon, though there were doubtless among them a large admixture of Angles, to which people the reigning family belonged. After the death of King Penda in 655, Mercia embraced Christianity, and never afterwards fell away from that faith. Their first Bishop was a Scot, that is, an Irishman, Diuna, and the second, Chad, whose name survives in Chaddesley, a village not far distant from Clent.

About a hundred years after the death of King Penda, in 758, Offa, who was under-king of the Hwiccas, became King of Mercia. Whether he lived in the neighbourhood of Clent cannot be known, but his name possibly survives in Offmoor Wood and Offmoor Farm; and writers who dilate upon the story of King Kenelm contend that there was a royal palace in Clent in these times, on the north-eastern slope of the hill; and it is pretty certain that the land of Clent was for long in the king's demesne. Offa was a great ruler, and under him Mercia became the first state in England. He fought many battles, but is most famous for his wars against the Welsh, much of whose country he subjugated; and then to keep them off the newly-conquered land he made a great dyke from the mouth of the Wye to the mouth of the Dee, which still bears the name of Offa's Dyke. He died in 794.

During Offa's reign a movement was taking place in England, the effects of which have the greatest consequence in rural life until this day. From the Vener-

able Bede's writings and from ancient charters, it is clear that churches were being erected within manors, and that these, each one more or less in its entirety, were becoming parishes, and the church consequently a parish church; and by the time the century was completed the system had doubtless been widely extended. Early Christianity had been monastic; from monasteries, as centres, priests had gone out to carry their doctrines into the surrounding country; but by degrees the lords of manors established churches on their estates, the priests of these being called seculars, in distinction to the monastic clergy, who were called regulars. And though in Clent no church is mentioned for years after this time, still if there were churches and priests in neighbouring manors the boundaries of Clent would tend to become fixed, though it still might have remained a churchless manor instead of a parish with church and priest. But the name of Clent did not belong to it at that time.

The legendary history of the district carries us back to the last years of the eighth century. Cenwulf, or Kenulph, was King of Mercia after Offa died in 821; and after Kenulph's death in 796, it is said that Kenelm, his son, became king. But there are grave doubts whether this be so. Kenelm was a little boy, eight years old, and as the King in those times was elected by the people, it is doubtful if they would have chosen a mere child to reign over them, and even if so, his reign must have been merely a nominal one. Besides, some lists miss out Kenelm altogether, and say that Cenwulf was succeeded by his brother Ceolwulf.

The story of Kenelm's murder, which associates this

district with the history of these times, must have been made up a long time after it occurred, for Clent appears to be given as the place where it happened, and as I said before, this locality could not have been called Clent till after the Danes had invaded England. Still it was king's land, and the story may well have had some foundation of fact.

Now the outline of the tale is this^d: Kenelm had a sister whose name was Cwenthryth, or Quendreda in Latin, who was jealous of her brother, and wished herself to be Queen. She asked Ascobert, the little boy's guardian, who was her lover, to slay him. So he took him away from the palace on pretence of hunting, and killed him in the wood, and hid the body under a thorn-tree. But a dove flew to St. Peter's at Rome, and dropped a scroll upon the high altar there, while Mass was being said; and on the scroll were words of which this is a later translation:—

“In Clent, in Cowbach, lieth under a thorn,
His head off-shorn, Kenelm king-born.”

So the Pope sent messengers to England, and they found the body under the thorn-tree, to which they were directed by the lowing of a cow. They took up the body and buried it at the Abbey of Winchcombe, in Gloucestershire, which had been founded by his father, Kenulph. And on the spot from which they raised the body a spring of water gushed out, over which men built a chapel, and dedicated it to the martyr-king, and it is called St. Kenelm's to this day.

There is no spring under the present St. Kenelm's

^d See Appendix A.

church ; there is one, however, but a very small one, under a hedge some fifty yards away. But a little further off, perhaps five hundred yards, in the garden of the Spring Farm, is a magnificent spring of water ; and this is, perhaps, the original spring round which the tradition has formed. Whether the water was holy or not, it has evidently been used to supply a series of stews or fish-ponds, the embankments of which are plainly visible in the meadow below the well. This spring is within the parish of Clent, but the church is not. It is built at the head of a steep ravine, down which runs the boundary of Clent, but the boundary itself bends to the north, to exclude the chapel, which would otherwise be situated half in Clent and half in Halesowen.

After Ceolwulf came to the throne of Mercia in 821, civil strife arose in that kingdom, and he was driven out by Beornwulf. At one time it seemed as if Mercia would become the leading state in England, but torn by internal dissensions, it soon sunk down, and became of little importance. Wiglaf, who after a time became king, was driven out by Ecgbert, King of Wessex, to whom Mercia submitted. Afterwards Burhred became king, who married Æthelswyth, sister of Alfred, and he reigned till he was driven out by the Danes in 874.

Alfred had become King of England in 871, and his life was a continual strife against the Danes. They had first appeared in England in the reign of Beorhtric, King of the West Saxons, who had married a daughter of King Offa. It was in the year 787, when Offa was still King of Mercia, that three ships came to the shores of England. They contained the first Vikings. They

were the forerunners of a mighty host, whose coming was the beginning of a strife which did not cease till William the Norman conquered England. They were not known by the name of Danes till 866, when organised hosts took the place of bands of freebooters. Having ravaged Northumbria and Yorkshire, they attacked Mercia; but for a while they were forced back by Burhred, the Mercian King; though shortly after Mercia paid them tribute. In the spring of 874 the Danes again attacked Mercia. King Burhred fled without striking a blow, and the kingdom was divided, the Danes taking the eastern half, and the rest was handed over to a king of their own making, another Ceolwulf, who came to the throne in 874.

After defeating the Danes at Ethandun in 878, Alfred, who was then King of England, made peace with them at Wedmore, and the Danes withdrew from the western part of England, and with the whole of western Mercia, the land of the Hwiccas passed under the rule of Alfred. But northern, eastern, and a good part of Central Britain remained in the hands of the Danes, and was called the Danelaw.

It was during these struggles, possibly, that Clent first got called by its present name. That the Danes had a settlement in this neighbourhood is pretty certain, since the names Danesfield and Danesford occur not far away. Besides, the name Walton, which is applied to a district of Clent, and to the highest eminence in the Clent Hills, is in the great majority of cases where it occurs in England close to a Danish or other isolated settlement^o.

^o Isaac Taylor's *Words and Places*, 3rd ed., p. 110, *note*.

After a portion of Mercia had thus come under the rule of the West Saxon King Alfred, he appointed Æthelred, who had been alderman of the Hwiccas, over the whole of the district, and gave him his daughter Æthelflæd in marriage, who was called afterwards the Lady of the Mercians. By degrees the power of the Danes in England diminished, and in 912, Edward, the son of Alfred, became lord over all Britain.

It is generally supposed that King Alfred divided England into counties, but this can hardly have been the case, as their bounds do not correspond with the bounds of that part of England which, outside the Danelaw, was under Alfred's rule. Mercia was probably divided into counties by Edward the Elder, after he had formally annexed that district. Previously it had been divided into five bishops' sees, and that of Worcester, the land of the Hwiccas, was formed into Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, and some of it put into Warwickshire, being the part of that county which still forms part of the diocese of Worcester^f. In each county there was placed a shire-reeve, or sheriff, to collect the king's dues, including the customary farms or rents from manors and towns. As these parishes had an ecclesiastical origin, shires had a fiscal origin, the district looked after by each shire-reeve forming a county; and how powerful the action of the sheriff in determining the boundaries of a shire was, is exemplified in the history of Clent, as will presently be shewn.

^f The question of the formation of counties is exhaustively treated in Parker's *Early History of Oxford*, pp. 129—134.

We get no glimpse of Clent for nearly a hundred years. It was in Worcestershire, that we know, and probably a place of some importance, as it gave its name to one of the large hundreds in the northern part of that county ; and it remained king's land, with two other villages much mixed up with it in later history, though always apparently in Staffordshire, King's Swinford and Rowley Regis, both of which shew in their modern names that they belonged to the king. But sometime before King Ethelred's death, which happened in 1016, he granted Clent, Kingswinford, and Tardebig, another Worcestershire manor, to Ægelsi, dean or prior of the monastery at Worcester, for two hundred pounds of silver, for the perpetual possession of the monastery. We learn this from a monk of Worcester, by name Hemming, who had it related to him by Wolstan, who was Bishop of Worcester for thirty years after 1062. When Edmund, the son of Ethelred, came to the throne, there was some hard fighting between him and the Danes under Cnut, who followed Edmund into the land of Hwiccas. In the middle of these disturbances Ægelsi died, and a certain Ævic, who was Sheriff of Staffordshire, a wicked man, says the monk, seized these villages, and, to use the words of the monk, "since there was not any one to do justice to Holy Church, the Kingdom being, as I have said, so disturbed, and order not yet being established under one King, the enemy of God alienated these villis." And as the Sheriff of Staffordshire, because he was in possession, received the rents due from Clent, in course of time Clent came to be considered part of that county along with Kingswinford

and Tardebig. So Clent came again into the possession of the Kings of England, and by the time of Edward the Confessor was again in the king's domain. It had practically become part of Staffordshire, though still reckoned in Worcestershire. So it remained at the time of the Conquest.

CHAPTER II.

CLENT UNDER THE KINGS.

WILLIAM had been on the throne of England twenty years when the survey of England, known as the Domesday Book, was made. In this book Clent is recorded as being in Worcestershire, and still the name-manor of a Worcestershire Hundred; but it is also said that the rent due from it to the king was received by the Sheriff of Staffordshire at Kingswinford. Clent was assessed at nine hides—a large manor, but probably Broom and Rowley were considered portions of it. We are not told the number of “carucates,” that is, the extent of cultivated land, but we learn that in domain was one “plough” and a half, while twelve villeins and three bordars had nine ploughs and a half,—that is, there were between the two classes, teams and all that was necessary to till eleven carucates, and that may, therefore, be taken as near the mark^a,—and there were three cowherds, and two leagues of wood, and the yearly payment from the manor to the king, received by the sheriff, was four pounds.

The quantity of land assessed at a hide varied not

^a Sometimes, when the number of *carucate* are recorded in Domesday as well as the *caruca*, we find the total number of ploughs or teams is not sufficient for the land; at others they are more than enough; and the reason for such items being recorded is that the agricultural “plant,” as we should call it, was taken into account in the assessment of the value of the manor. (*Parker.*)

only in different parts of England, but even in the same district, according to the surrounding circumstances. A carucate was as much land as could be cultivated in a year by one team of horses with a plough complete, included under the word *caruca*, and this amount of course varied upon different soils, probably from 60 to 80, or even 100 acres.

In every manor there was a bailiff, who lived in the chief house in the manor, if the lord did not live there himself. The domain was the land kept in the lord's own hand, the rest of the manor being cultivated by the villeins, whose labour was their rent for the lands they themselves held of the lord. The services due from them varied according to the customs of the manor. The villein could not leave his holding, nor, on the other hand, could he be thrust out; nor could he marry his daughter without leave of the lord, paying for the permission a recognised fine. If a villein did get permission to migrate from the manor, he had to pay a yearly tax called Chivage. The manor-house in which the bailiff lived was usually near the church, and was called the Aula, or Hall, and in Clent is doubtless represented by Clent Hall, which, since the lord himself has never resided within the manor, has remained in the condition of an ordinary farm-house until quite modern times.

At the bailiff's house the Court Baron and the Court Leet were usually held. The former consisted of freeholders, and was concerned with civil proceedings; while the latter was made up of all tenants, both freemen and others, whose principal business it was to be a jury for the trial of offenders. In later times the bailiff

rendered an annual account to the lord, which imitated precisely the great audit of the king's revenue in the account taken of receipts and expenditures. They were always in the same form. The names of the tenants, the amount and value of their services were all recorded. The fines paid for offences, for assaults, and for frauds, were all duly entered and accounted for. This system came into use all over England a few years before Henry III.'s death, in 1273^b.

The bordars, another class of tenants in Clent, mentioned in Domesday, were landless men who worked on the lord's domain as ordinary labourers, receiving wages for their work, and paying for their cottages by their labour. It is probable that most of the houses clustered round the manor-house or the church, if there was one. Isolated farm-houses were not built, as a rule, until the large common fields which everywhere existed were enclosed.

No church is mentioned under Clent in the Domesday Survey in 1086; it had been during most of the antecedent time a king's manor, and the king was possibly not so careful of the spiritual state of his tenants as a less exalted lord; but at that period the adjoining parishes of Broughton, Hales, and Hagley, possessed priests, though Hagley was without a church.

Of Rowley and Broom, both probably included in Clent, as neither is mentioned in the Domesday Survey, the former had not severed its connection with Clent in 1177, for in that year the two manors together had to pay a mark, or 13s. 4d., to the king as tallage or extra tax; and no mention is made of the

^b Rogers's *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, New ed., p. 24.

share of each. Apparently in 1170 the value of Rowley was thought to be assessed too low, and it was increased by 6s. 2d., and afterwards by 13s. 4d. In virtue of this increase its name occurs in the sheriffs' rolls, and in course of time the special word used to denote this increase was dropped, and it stood in the roll as a king's manor, at a rent of a mark a year. From this time its existence as a separate manor, independent of Clent, began, though this separation was not quite complete in 1195, when Rowley was again joined with Clent in providing another mark for the king's necessities. In things spiritual it was under the jurisdiction of the Clent parson until 1835, when it was formally erected into a separate parish by Act of Parliament.

With regard to Broom, during the reign of Henry I., about 1154^e, it had been separated from Clent, and granted to Maurice de Ombersley, at a yearly rent of £1 13s. 4d., paid to the Sheriff of Staffordshire, which sum King John bestowed upon the nuns of Brewood, in Staffordshire, in the year 1199, and consequently the name of Broom is no longer entered on the sheriffs' rolls.

Maurice de Ombersley built the church at Broom, which is dedicated to St. Peter, and it would seem that there were churches dedicated to St. Peter both at Broom and Clent, unless St. Peter's at Broom were not the original church of the manor before it was divided; since in 1203 a dispute arose, which ended in an action at law between the nuns of Brewood and Master Herbert the parson of St. Peter's of Clent, as to

* W. Salt's *Staffordshire Collections*, ii. p. 174.

the right of presentation to the church at Broom^d. In the Assize Roll of 1199, the first mention from which the existence of a church at Clent can be inferred is to be found, and it there says it is in the gift of the king, and that Master Herbert holds it^e. The dispute between Master Herbert and the nuns ran on for some time. Herbert said that he was the parson of the church, and that Alexander, the priest at Broom, who was just dead, was his vicar, and that he didn't see why there should be any trial at all, as the church was not vacant, he himself being alive^f. To this the nuns answered that Alexander was independent of Herbert, and that when he died the Bishop sequestered the living, and still held it^g. In the end the plea of the nuns prevailed, for the verdict of the jurors was that Richard de Ambersley, who held the 'terra' of Broom before it came into the king's hands, and who was the son of the founder of the church, had presented the last parson; and so Broom was cut quite free from Clent^h. This suit

^d No evidence is available to show which of the two rival establishments at Brewood, the Black Ladies or the White Ladies, had to do with the church at Broom. Both seem to have had property in the manor. [*Tanner's Notitia.*]

^e W. Salt's *Staffordshire Collections*, iii. p. 39.

^f *Ibid.*, p. 124.

^g *Ibid.*

^h *Ibid.*, p. 127. From these proceedings it would appear that Master Herbert alleged that Broom was ecclesiastically not separated from Clent at this time. Two points appear curious. The church of Broom must have been built with the Bishop's license, and it might be supposed that since the founder had appointed the first priest the question of independence had been settled. And again it is by no means clear what the Prioress of Brewood had to do with the matter, unless the advowson had been assigned to her by Richard, for it was only the farm or yearly rent that the king appears to have given to the nuns. (*Ibid.*, ii. p. 92.)

was probably a last effort on the part of the Clent people to keep Broom to themselves, and if the verdict had been different, Broom would probably have been part of Clent parish to this day, perhaps in closer relation to it than Rowley used to be, since Broom adjoins Clent, while Rowley is some distance away.

Clent first appears in the sheriffs' rolls in 1169, when the inhabitants had to pay two marks, or £1 6s. 8d., towards the expenses of the marriage of the Princess Matilda, daughter of Henry II.; and in 1173 a sum of 40s. was assessed on the parish. In 1177 Clent and Rowley together paid 13s. 4d., and ten years later, in 1187, the sum Clent had to find was £2 18s. 4d. But the inhabitants paid only half this sum in this year, and the arrears continued unpaid till 1190, when a further sum of 10s. 7d. was paid. The next year the remaining 18s. 7d. was either paid or struck off by King Richard I. before he left for the East.

We now come to a payment of another kind made by the Clent people. In 1192 they were fined two marks, or 26s. 8d., by the sheriff because there had been a murder committed in the parish, and the inhabitants could not deliver the murderer into the hands of justice. We can see clearly how closely the interests of all the dwellers of one parish were bound up together, since for the wrong-doing of one all are fined—a punishment they could only escape by producing the criminal.

In the year 1193, King Richard's aunt, Emma, wife of David, King of North Wales, surrendered her manor of Hales, to which name Owen became joined on account of the Welsh connection, to the king, and received in exchange the yearly allowance of £22 6s. 8d.

Of this sum £19 17s. was charged by the Sheriff of Staffordshire on the manors of Alrewas, Tettenhall, Kingswinford, and Clent, £2 6s. 8d. on the manors of Broom and Rowley Regis, and 3s. on Cradley mill. This exchange, however, was to last only so long as the king pleased, and was not in perpetuity¹.

In 1195 another tallage was imposed on Clent and Rowley in conjunction of the amount of one mark. Two shillings was paid into the treasury; nor do we see how the rest was paid; but in 1199 the people of Clent owed two marks, which they duly accounted for.

It must have been at this period that a church was founded in Clent, probably on the spot where the church now stands, but it could not have been the present one, since this is dedicated to St. Leonard, while the original one appears to have been dedicated to St. Peter. So much we may gather from the record of the dispute between the nuns of Brewood and Master Herbert of St. Peter's at Clent, previously alluded to. Besides this litigation Master Herbert became involved in another lawsuit.

It began in 1203. There were three virgates of land at Hulle, as it is called, probably meaning the hill, or the hilly district of the parish, which Master Herbert claimed as belonging to his church of Clent, and was then in possession of². These were claimed also by one Thomas de Esley as being his property, since they belonged to his father Robert when he died. Thomas de Esley gave up the prosecution of the suit for some

¹ W. Salt's *Staffordshire Collections*, ii. p. 27.

² *Ibid.*, iii. p. 124.

reason or other, and Robert, his brother, took it up. The case lingered on for years, and the slow process of the law seems to have been slower then than it is even at the present day, for the matter was not decided till 1227, when the Esleys won the case. But by that time Robert was dead, and Master Herbert also was no longer parson of Clent. The jury found that the three virgates belonged to John de Esley, Robert's son, and Michael was the parson of Clent, who was in possession of the land, but had no right to it¹. Esley, or Astley, is the first surname met with belonging to a Clent man, and the proceedings disclose three generations of the family, Osbert, Robert, and John.

In 1251 this matter seems to have cropped up again, for in that year proceedings were taken by John Waleraund, parson of Rowley and also of Clent, against John de Estley and others as to the right of ownership of two and a half acres of land and half an acre of wood in Rowley, and six shillings of yearly rent in Clent, the question being whether they belonged to his church of Clent or no. It is not known how these new proceedings terminated. Waleraund, perhaps the progenitor of the numerous Waldrons in Clent and the neighbourhood, came afterwards to great honour, having, in 1257, with other offices, the custody of the Episcopate of Lichfield and Coventry during a vacancy, while ten years later he had leave from the king to hunt in all his forests in seven counties in England, among which were Staffordshire and Worcestershire.

By this time, however, Clent had passed out of the

¹ W. Salt's *Staffordshire Collections*, iv. p. 63.

hands of the king. King John, in 1205, had granted the manor, with those of Kingswinford and Mere, to Ralph de Somery, lord of Dudley Castle, in exchange for the manor of Wolverhampton and 100 marks, or £66 13s. 4d., and an annual rent of £21 13s. 4d., which was shared thus between the three manors: for Kingswinford he was to pay £9 each year, for Mere, £8, and for Clent £4 13s. 4d.

CHAPTER III.

CLENT UNDER THE SOMERYS.

IT is probable that the inhabitants of Clent knew but little of this change of ownership of their parish for some time ; it may be considered certain that they gained but little by it. Perhaps, on the other hand, the distant rule of the king was exchanged for a closer particularity in the due rendering of their services and the payment of their fines. They did not escape the tallages or special taxes king's manors had to pay for special objects ; for the custom was that manors which had once been royal property should be tallaged by their new lords when the king tallaged his own manors.

The land of Clent at this time was not considered very valuable, nor was it very highly cultivated. We can positively say this from the very numerous roads which intersect the parish, and in older times they were still more numerous. Roads are one of the most persistent features of the country side, and how ancient many of the roads and lanes in Clent are may be seen from the depth they have been worn into the ground. Where land is valuable roads are few, where it is not of much account they are plentiful. At the present time there are two places in the parish where five roads meet, and many others where they intersect. It is clear that there was no need of economy of land when these communications sprung into existence.

It was probably soon after Somery became lord of

Clent that the oldest work now existing in the church at Clent was built. Doubtless he would feel more interest in his manor than the king did when it was in his possession, and at all events he would be more accessible to priestly influence. There is some difficulty in understanding how the church has got its present characteristics. The pillars dividing the south aisle from the nave are undoubtedly the most ancient part of the edifice, and are late Norman, much like the pillars in the nave of the church at Halesowen. They were built at a time when Norman architecture was giving way to Early English, and this would point to a date of 1200 or a little later. At Halesowen the tall nave is covered with a roof of Early English work of typical character, exactly like the roof of Clent chancel. Under every rafter additional pieces of timber are fixed, which are cut into a circular form, so that the general appearance is that of a series of parallel ribs forming a barrel vault. There is a small moulded rib running along the top, and a cornice next to the wall-plate, the same in both churches; and without doubt the roof of Clent chancel is of the same age as the pillars of the south aisle. But how the roof came into its present position is not so easy to understand, for the chancel is late Perpendicular work, as is sufficiently indicated by the stiff transome which runs across the east window, which could not have been built till after the year 1400. Besides this, the very marked orientation, as it is called, of the chancel has to be accounted for. The axis of the chancel is not in the same line as that of the nave, but bends towards the south at a considerable angle. The

rafters of the chancel roof join very awkwardly to the body of the church, so awkwardly, indeed, as to bear the appearance of patchiness, as if they had been intended to cover an area of a different length from the present chancel. The tower is quite as late as the chancel, being Perpendicular work also. Perhaps the first church consisted only of a nave, south aisle, and chancel, and the last mentioned portion was rebuilt and the nave re-roofed when the tower was added in later times, when also some of the old roof which once covered the body of the church might have been used for the new chancel, both being of the same width. The whole church was covered with shingles, or wooden tiles made of cleft oak, and so it remained till after 1750. It is clear that there was an altar at the east end of the south aisle as well as at the east end of the chancel, as the piscina or water-drain in the wall shews ; and it was most probably dedicated to some other saint than St. Leonard, and had a special endowment from some pious founder. Perhaps it was dedicated to St. Peter, that the memory of the old church's name-saint might not be lost when the new one was built and dedicated to St. Leonard. No record exists of the incumbents who ministered at Clent between Michael, lately mentioned, and Simon de Somery, who was rector in 1274, though we know from the Seisdon Hundred Roll of 1255 that John Wale-raund held the church there, valued at 10 marks, at that date ^a.

Something that had considerable influence on the history of Clent now took place, and that was the

^a W. Salt's *Staffordshire Collections*, V., Part I., p. 117.

foundation of Halesowen Abbey. In the year 1215 King John granted to Peter de Rupibus, Bishop of Winchester, the manor and advowson of Halesowen, and the chapels of St. Kenelm's and Frankley, as the endowment of the new abbey, and in the next year a body of Premonstratensian monks came and took up their abode in their new quarters. We can imagine with what interest the inhabitants of Clent would regard the stately building rising some three miles away from their parish, and without doubt many Clent labourers would be employed upon the work. The influence of the monks would quickly make itself felt in the neighbourhood; their figures would become familiar as they took their recreation on the hills, their ministrations would doubtless be carried into the houses of many of the inhabitants, not superseding those of their own parson, but in addition to them. And when once the monastery was established its possessions increased; the monks were fond of power and used their spiritual influence to obtain it; and they cast envious eyes upon the neighbouring property. In after times, as will be recorded, they established a firm footing in Clent. Several fields in the hilly district bear the name of Monks, including the large field now called Mawkesmoor, certainly a corruption of Monks' Moor.

In 1253 another lawsuit discloses the names of two more Clent families. John de la Chambre, a name which would now be represented by Chambers, and which is not found afterwards in Clent, though several of this name lived in Rowley, brought an action against Matilda de Feugeres, concerning the right to a certain

tenement in Clent. No particulars of the suit have been found, but it is probable that Matilda was a widow who had taken possession of the property as her right as dower, and John was the next male heir of the last holder.

In this same year, 1253, Roger de Somery, who had now succeeded his father Ralph, obtained from the King, Henry III., leave to hold a fair in Clent on the eve and day of St. Kenelm, and the two days after. St. Kenelm's day is the 17th of July, and the fair would be held, therefore, from the 16th to the 19th of that month. It is difficult to imagine at the present time how great an advantage the villagers would derive from the establishment of a fair in their midst. A fair could not be held without a grant from the king, and the privilege of holding one was eagerly sought by the lords of manors, not so much, perhaps, for the advantage of their tenants as for the opportunity of pocketing the tolls. At the fair would be gathered together persons from all parts of the neighbourhood, and merchants from distant towns; the latest news would be retailed and the villagers familiarised with the manners and sayings of the outside world; while money would be brought into the parish by the traffickers. A civilising influence would come yearly into the parish, and though the fair lasted only four days, still its effects would be wide-spread and enduring. The fair in a manor was generally held on the feast of a saint, and at one time usually in the churchyard, or if not so close to the church, at all events in very near proximity to it. In Clent the fair was probably held in the wide open space before the church. Some fifty years ago the last

surviving remnant of this fair was to be seen every year on the second Sunday in July, when a few stalls were erected by the side of the churchyard, in the narrow road by the brook, at which some trifling articles were sold, the staple commodity being cherries. The fixture of a day in the month had given way to one of a day in the week; and shortly after the fair seems to have merged into a wake, which, becoming accompanied by great disorders on the hills, was soon suppressed, and the fair vanished with it, after existing nearly six hundred years.

Clent was tallaged, that is, a special tax was assessed upon the tenants for the benefit of the lord, in 1252, 1255, and 1260, years in which the king tallaged his own manors. The direction to the Sheriff of Staffordshire to allow this tallage to be taken says that it was to be "reasonable." No doubt this was an elastic term in the mind of the lord's bailiff, who, to gain his lord's favour, would naturally extract all he could out of the tenants.

Another dispute in which Clent property was the bone of contention found its way in 1272 before the Justices of Assize. Nicholas Aleyn and John de Hulle quarrelled over the ownership of a house and a virgate of land. The disputants were cousins, and many family details are given in the pleadings. The gist of the dispute was that Nicholas said all the heirs of a certain Robert were dead, and the right to his property had reverted to an uncle, who was his own father, while the defendant said his right came to him through a son of Robert, who had not died without children and heirs, since he himself was such a child and heir,

and was still alive. How it was finally settled is not known.

The south of Staffordshire and the neighbouring parts of Worcestershire were at this time largely covered with forests. Forests were not necessarily places consisting entirely of woodland, but were localities set apart for the rearing and collecting of the beasts of the chase for the King's pleasure ; and as such were governed by quite a different set of laws from the rest of the country. The forest of Kinver, mainly in Staffordshire, spread over the adjoining parts of Worcestershire, and took in the parish of Hagley, while the boundary of Feckenham forest ran along the brook that divides Belbroughton, and approached Clent on the other side as near as Bell End and Shut Mill. In a forest there were stringent rules regulating even the size of the dogs the people might keep, and the height of their garden hedges, which were not to be so high as to impede the king's deer ; and from these and from many other equally irksome laws the Clent men would escape. Henry II. had added many Worcestershire manors to Feckenham forest, "to the great damage of their lords," says the old record ; indeed the hardships of the forest laws was one of the grievances of barons and people against the king in the reign of John. The privilege of the people of Clent in living outside the bounds of either forest was doubtless highly prized by the inhabitants.

The relations between a lord of a manor and his tenants were only a copy of those which existed between the lord himself and the king. As when a tenant died a fine was paid by his successor to the lord, so

when a lord died a fine called a "relief" was due from the heir to the king, and until this was paid he could not take possession. In each county an officer was appointed called an Escheator, who took into his hands estates when their lords died ; and on receiving a proper writ, he summoned a jury to enquire of what land the lord died possessed, the services due from him, and the name and age of the next heir. These enquiries were called "Inquisitions post mortem," and the findings of the jury frequently contain much information about the circumstances of the manors. With the abolition of the feudal system these enquiries were, in many of the objects for which they were held, abolished also, but with regard to others remain still in force, the familiar coroner's inquest being an "Inquisition post mortem."

In 1273 Roger de Somery died, and the usual inquests were held to enquire into his numerous estates, Clent among the number. A jury was summoned, and in it we get the first list of Clent men or their neighbours. All the jurors must have known something about Clent, for in those days jurors were expected not only to hear, but to give evidence. Here is a list of the names :—

Walter, Son of Stephen.

Henry le Morice.

John Maynard.

Henry de Lond.

Henry in the Wyke.

Richard Maynard.

Robert de Fonte.

William de Walton.

Richard, Son of Agnes.

Richard in the Hull.

Hugh de Monte.

Richard Sparry.

Surnames just at this time were beginning to come into general use in England. Necessity led to their

adoption as soon as population increased, and they grew naturally into use without any law or enactment upon the subject. They were taken either from baptismal names, or from places and offices, or from occupations and nicknames. In the list above given instances occur of many of these. There is *le Morice*, whatever that may mean; there are the baptismal names of father or mother passing into distinctive appellations; there are the places where they dwelt so used; and there are the already settled surnames of *Maynard* and *Sparry*. Of this list only two can certainly be said to be dwellers in *Clent*, *William de Walton* and *Richard Sparry*, while *Richard in the Hill* may probably be claimed as a *Clent* man. *Walton* is not found afterwards as a *Clent* surname, but the *Sparrys* continued in *Clent*, and their name repeatedly occurs until about the middle of the seventeenth century, when the heiress of the *Sparrys* married an *Amphlett*, bringing the latter family into the parish. A Saxon *Sparry* is mentioned in *Domesday Book* as holding a manor in *Staffordshire*.

The findings of this jury tell us much of the value of *Clent* to the lord at that time. There was a chief messuage and garden, the rent of which was 2*s*. The lord also possessed in his domain two virgates of land containing sixteen acres, which on account of the poverty of the land was worth only 8*d*. an acre, while the usual amount of seed corn able to be sown on each acre was one quarter of barley or two of oats. He also possessed a meadow worth 4*s*. a year, and the pasture on the moor of *Hodehull* was worth 3*s*. The rent of assize, or the fixed sum payable to the lord each year

from the manor as a whole, was worth £6 17s. 9½*d.*, while other services and fines, including heriots, and the fines payable on the marriages of the tenants' daughters, were worth 20s. yearly, the total annual value of the manor being £8 15s. 5½*d.* The advowson of the church also belonged to the lord, and was worth 10 marks, or £7 13s. 4*d.* a year. The jurors, perhaps, give some indication in the last sentence of their finding, that the tenants kicked somewhat against their lord's requirements, for they say that the manor should be tallaged by the year and not by estimate. Doubtless these estimates were sometimes rather high.

Roger de Somery left, besides a son Roger, a widow Amabelle, daughter of Robert de Chaucombe, and to her Clent and Kingswinford, which seem always in their times to have been coupled together, were assigned as part of her dower, the two manors together being valued at £25 15s. 10½*d.* a year. Roger the younger himself died in 1290. In the year 1285 a Gilbert de Chaucombe had been presented to the living of Clent.

The first rector of Clent whose name is found in the Bishop's books is Simon de Somery, a relation, of course, of the lord of the manor. It does not appear in which year he was presented, but on the 1st of September, 1274, he received permission from the Bishop to proceed to foreign parts for the purposes of study. In 1282 another rector of Clent, Hugh Hamelin, was summoned to answer the complaint of Gilbert de Chaucombe, a relative of the then Roger de Somery's mother, that he had not taken priest's orders, and that therefore by the Canons of the Council of Lyons he

had become legally deprived of his rectory. Either these proceedings lasted nearly three years and were then successful, or Hamelin died; for on the 1st of March, 1285, Gilbert de Chaucombe was presented to the living which he appears to have held for thirty-two years.

The report of the jurors, among which appear no Clent names, summoned on the death of the second Roger in 1290, does not give any information about Clent, except that the advowson of the church, with the chapel of Rowley, is valued at 30 marks. It is lumped with Kingswinford in the usual manner, and indeed is only mentioned to say that the perquisites of the two courts of Swinford and Clent were worth yearly 40s., and that altogether the two manors were worth £28 3s. 4½d. a year, out of which twenty-five marks, or £16 13s. 4d., had to be paid to the king.

In 1304 a certain William de Nunchurch had committed a murder in Clent, and being tried for the crime, was found guilty and duly hanged. Under such circumstances the profits of any land which he held would be due to the king for a year and a day. A jury was therefore summoned to enquire if this had been so in the case of a house and four acres that the felon had held of Gilbert de Chaucombe, Rector of Clent. The jury were:—

Thomas de Moushull.
Hugh de Fundemesleye.
Robert de Addenebroke.
Robert de Muryhurst.
Henry del Merch.
Benedict de Ordesleye.

Henry Adam.
Richard Russel.
Richard Huwet.
Walter de Caldeswell.
John le Cursy.
Thomas de Wynneshurst.

These must have been men intimately acquainted with Clent, but they were far from being all Clent men, since none of the names occur in a list of Clent householders twenty years after, which will be given later on. It may positively be said that Huwet and Muryhurst came from Rowley, Adam and Merch from Kingswinford; while Wynneshurst and Addenbroke were probably Oldswinford men, and Caldeswell came from Kidderminster. It shews that there must have been considerable intercommunication between villages that men coming from such distant places should know anything about Clent affairs. Wherever they came from they found that Nunchurch's property had been in the king's hands for the recognised year and day, and later the sheriff was ordered to give it back to the rector. There is a mistake in their finding. They give the rector's Christian name as Simon, not Gilbert, and it is difficult to see how such a mistake could occur.

It will be noticed that I have written up to the present rector, not vicar, of Clent. It was not until some years after, when the monastery of Halesowen had got hold of the advowson, that they procured the diversion of the great tithes into their own hands, and the parson was lowered into the position of vicar. The first vicar of Clent was presented in 1345.

In 1322, John de Somery, the son of the last Roger, died, and the usual inquisition as to his property took place, but nothing as to the state of the manor of Clent is to be gleaned therefrom; and the same year Lucy, his widow, did her fealty to the king. Her share as dower of his property at first included the advowson of

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Clent and Rowley, but it was given her husband's sister Joan the same year. As a lord exacted a fine from his tenants for the marriage of a widow or daughter, so a fine had to be paid to the king on the re-marriage of a lord's widow; and in accordance with this custom Lucy de Somery made oath and said she would not marry again without the king's license. Perhaps the strangest thing these proceedings reveal is the rapid advance made in the valuation of the advowson of Clent with its appendant chapel of Rowley. In 1273 valued at 10 marks, in 1290 it was valued at 30 marks, or £20, and in 1322 at 40 marks, or £26 13s. 4d., while in the next year it was granted to Lucy de Someri as being of the yearly value of 50 marks, or £33 6s. 8d. At this time John de Honnesworth was rector; he had succeeded Chaucombe on 25th May, 1317.

John de Somery left no children, and his estates were divided between his two sisters. Clent fell to the share of Joan, wife of Thomas, son of John de Botetourt, of Weley Castle, in Northfield.

CHAPTER IV.

CLENT IN LORD BOTETOURT'S TIME.

THERE had been hard times all over England during the eight years before Joan Botetourt became possessed, in 1322, of the village of Clent. The years 1315 and 1316 had been so wet that corn never ripened, and we are told that numbers of the poorer people perished from famine. Murrain, too, broke out among the cattle, and the losses were very great. A change in the relationship between the lord of the manor and his tenants was now becoming general. Money payments were accepted as rent instead of personal services, and this was to the advantage of both parties. The tenant was freed from the irksomeness of being called away from his own work to labour for the lord, and money would be quite as valuable to the lord as unwilling labour, and he would be spared the cost of overlookers to see that the proper tale of work was done. By this arrangement the position of villein or serf was rendered but little different from that of the regular freeholder, who from early times had held his lands by a fixed rent; and tenants now began to be called tenants by copy or by custom.

It is difficult to picture an English village at this time. In the first place the use of bricks was very rare, and houses were either of stone, or consisted of a timber framework filled in with plaster held together by basket-work of twigs, or with clay, in which

chopped straw had been kneaded. The roof was thatched, and there were no chimneys, except in castles and manor houses, while the floor was the bare earth. Sometimes there were upper rooms under the thatch approached by a ladder or a rough staircase. The long winter evenings were unilluminated by other light than that of the blazing wood fire on the clay hearth, for fat and oil was dear, and out of the reach of any but the rich^a.

Every householder probably possessed a pig, and fowls were plentiful, as is seen from the many rents that consist either of a number of these birds or of their eggs. Oxen were used chiefly for labour, and but little beef was eaten, at all events except in the houses of the great; while sheep formed by far the largest proportion of animals kept on the farm. But it must be remembered that there were no roots of any kind grown in these times either for man or beast, and the keep of herds and flocks in winter would be very meagre, consisting of coarse hay and straw, and pea and vetch haulms. Sheep were usually kept under cover in winter for fear of the rot. And in 1280 a new disease appeared among the flocks in England, the scab, which had been unknown before this time, and it caused great losses to the farmer. But farmers were free from the ravages of ground game; in the thirteenth century rabbits were comparatively unknown. At that time a rabbit was worth as much as a sheep, and a hundred years later as much as a goose.

The famine which commenced in 1315, lasted with greater or less severity till 1321, but a time of great

^a Rogers's *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, New ed., p. 67.

plenty and prosperity followed it. In 1327 the first parliament of King Edward III. granted him a subsidy to meet the expenses of the Scottish wars. The tax was paid by every one alike, freeman and villein, and consisted of the twentieth part of all the moveable goods of every man, in the house or out of the house, on Michaelmas-day, 1327, excepting only the jewels, robes, and plate belonging to the upper classes, many of whom indeed escaped altogether. The roll of the names of the people who paid the tax in Staffordshire is in existence, and it shews also the amounts assessed on each^b. Clent and Broom were assessed together to this subsidy, and the amount of their tax was £2 6s. 11½d. This is the list of those who paid:—

	s.	d.
Thomas de Kelkestowe	2	6
John Skyrry	1	0
Symon Rondulf	0	6½
Thomas Cholynes	1	6
Richard Sparry	1	0
Richard Othettul	2	0
Roger Jurdan	2	6
Richard, the son of Richard . .	3	6
John le Cok	1	0
Nicholas Hawoten	2	6
John Prat	3	0
Henry de Warfeld	2	6
William de Spelstowe	1	0
Nigell de Brome	0	8
Richard Prat	3	0
Richard Atte Hall	2	6

^b W. Salt's *Staffordshire Collections*, vii. p. 253.

			s.	d.
Nicholas Atte Siche	.	.	2	0
Richard Rondulf	.	.	1	6
William de Thikenol	.	.	1	0
Henry in the Wyle	.	.	0	9
William the Oldreve	.	.	1	0
John Savyn	.	.	3	0
John le Welle	.	.	3	0
William de Forbrigge	.	.	2	6
Walter Deneyes	.	.	1	6
Total			£2	<u>6 11$\frac{1}{4}$</u>

The sum Clent and Broom paid cannot be compared with those of the neighbouring Worcestershire parishes, but some idea of the wealth of Clent in relation to other Staffordshire parishes may be gained by comparing the various amounts.

		£	s.	d.
Clent and Broom	paid	2	6	11 $\frac{1}{4}$
Rowley	"	2	5	1
Enville	"	2	1	1
Wolverhampton	"	3	6	3
Kingswinford	"	4	2	0
Kinver	"	5	4	0

Of the names in this list many are not met with again; on the other hand several existed till quite recently in the parish. Pratt, Hill, Hall, Sich, and Cooke were the names of families who lived in Clent many years after this time; Savyn is probably the name of Sanyn, which name we shall hear again, and a Sparry is in the list. Thicknall then gave its name to a family which occurs again in Clent history; and

the old village called Kenelmstowe, which was near St. Kenelm's, but has now utterly disappeared, was the dwelling-place of one of the chief inhabitants, who heads the list. It will be noticed that there is a larger proportion of regular surnames in this list than in those previously given, shewing that they were coming more generally into use. In another generation the descriptive prepositions *othe* for "of the," *atte* for "at the," and *de*, "of," would be dropped, and the appellations they qualify become surnames pure and simple. One name in the list, Richard Atte Hall, shews that Clent Hall was then in existence, and called by the name it still bears.

Another subsidy was collected in 1332, like its predecessor, to meet the expenses of the Scotch war, and a tax of a fifteenth of all goods held in counties was levied on the inhabitants^c. The names, of which there are 17 as against 25 in the previous list, are somewhat different, and only 10 appear in both. The new ones are as follows :—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Adam Byngham	1	6
Richard the Tailor	4	6
Alexander of Spelstowe	1	3
Richard of Caldecote	8	0
Henry Hoges	4	6
Richard Otheshull	2	0
John the Smyth	2	0

Richard Otheshull was a second of the name, there being two in the list; and the high amount paid by Richard of Caldcote shows that a man of some com-

^c W. Salt's *Staffordshire Collections*, x. p. 86.

parative wealth was living at a house probably near the site of the present Calcot Hill Farm.

Joan Botetourt's husband, Thomas, had died in 1322, the same year that his wife had come into her portion of her brother's property ; and in 1338 she died herself, and a jury enquired into her possessions. They say that in Clent there is neither "message, land, meadow, pasture, mill, nor the like" belonging to her in the manor, so that the domain and other possessions of former lords must have been disposed of, and the mere lordship of the manor with the advowson and the rents and perquisites of the manor courts retained. They say she possesses the rent of assize of the amount of £8 4s. 4d. a year, while the other court dues are worth 3s. 4d. annually ; and out of this every year the sum of £5 was due to the king. Her son, John Botetourt, was her next heir.

The report of this jury leads me to mention one peculiarity of Clent at that time. There was no mill in the parish, and in this it was an exception to the general rule. Almost every manor had its mill either of wind or water, and the mill always belonged to the lord, who obliged his tenants to grind their corn there. The miller, or *molendarius*, as he was called in Latin, was an important man in every manor, and in the subsidy roll mentioned above his name occurs in most of the parishes. At what time a mill was established in Clent is doubtful, but the name of Old-mill Farm gives us a clue to where one was situated in comparatively early times. But in 1740 this mill had disappeared, and probably it had vanished long before that date, for there is no trace now of a mill-

pool at Oldmill. At a Manor Court held in 1522 the vill of Lower Clent was ordered to mend the road between Oldmylle gate and Clent under a penalty of 40*d*. It is not improbable that the mill was early moved up the stream, perhaps to where the Vine-mill now stands, where the water could be more easily pounded up, owing to the configuration of the ground.

John Botetourt was now lord of the manor. He was still a young man when he came into the property on his mother's death in 1338. In 1329 he had bought of Edmund de Hagley six acres of land in Cowbach in Clent, and at the same time he purchased from him the manor and advowson of the neighbouring parish of Hagley. His mother, Joan, had probably lived at Meer in Staffordshire, one of the manors whose history had been linked to that of Clent for some time past, since her name is entered for a considerable amount in the roll of subsidy payments in that parish ; and she seems to have had a smaller establishment in the manor of Handsworth. It was not long after Lord Botetourt had come into possession before the influence of the monks of Halesowen began to tell upon him, and the consequences were soon apparent. There was always a jealousy between the regular clergy, as the inhabitants of monasteries were called, and the secular clergy, those who lived outside an abbey, and ministered in the country parishes ; and it is no doubt with a sense of triumph at the satisfaction of a long-continued desire, that at last the Abbot and Convent of Halesowen received the grant of the advowson of Clent from the young lord.

The grant is dated April 4th, 1340. "Know all

men," it runs, in Latin of course, "that I, John Bote-tourte, Lord of Weleye, at the instigation of God, and for the salvation of my soul, and the souls of my ancestors and my heirs, have given, granted, and by this charter confirmed to God and the Church of the Blessed Mary of Halesowen, to the Abbot and Convent of that place of Premonstratensian monks there serving God, two acres of land with the appurtenances in Clent, together with the advowson of the Church of Clent and Rowley with their chapels." Thus one step towards securing to themselves the profits of the advowson of Clent was gained by the monastery; nor did they wait long before they made a further advance.

In 1342 Parliament granted the king, with other subsidies, the ninth lamb, the ninth fleece, and the ninth sheaf belonging to all benefices and religious establishments throughout the country, so that in fact the grant was of a species of tithe. Certain persons were chosen in each parish, and they found upon their oaths the true value of these ninths. In Clent, Richard Hill, John le Webbe, William de Legh, and Hugh Huwet were the persons who made the return, and they say that the ninths, as aforesaid, in Clent and Rowley were worth 15 marks, or £10, and in addition the parson of Clent held one virgate of land worth 10 marks and 10 pence, or £6 14s. 2d. In another return for the same year, Hugh Huwet, William le Weebe, Henry de Bradburn, and Richard the son of Richard, are said to be the persons responsible for the payment of the money. Of these persons, Huwet was an inhabitant of Rowley, while Richard, Richard's son, in the later return, was in all probability the Richard

Hill of the former one, who has been mentioned before. Webb was a Clent man, for the name occurs again in connection with the parish : as regards Legh, his dwelling-place is unknown, but Henry Bradburn lived in Clent. In this same roll John de Stuff and John de Dunclent are mentioned as owing 10s. for the ninths of Broom Church. There is a considerable difference between the value of the ninths of the two benefices, those of Clent being worth twenty times as much as Broom.

It was two years after this, in 1344, that the monks of Halesowen secured to themselves and their successors the appropriation of the great tithes of Clent from the Bishop of Worcester. The interests of the parishioners were really little thought of by the parties to proceedings such as these, whatever might be their professions. The monastery wanted the money, and the Bishop did not despise the small annual sum rendered him by the appropriating monastery for allowing what was more or less an act of robbery. The tithes of the lord's land were intended to support a church for the lord's tenants who paid them, not to fill the coffers of a neighbouring monastery. And the excuses they urged for asking for this grant were puerile in the extreme. They said that the people's devotion to the head of St. Barbara, which had formerly brought a considerable sum into their treasury, was growing sadly cold, while from their position on a frequented road they were obliged to exercise great hospitality, and had only slender means with which to do so ; moreover many of their houses in Halesowen had been burned down, causing them great loss. Whatever may be

thought of such excuses as sufficient cause for depriving the people of Clent of the services of a rector, and putting in his place some half-starved priest from a neighbouring monastery, they effected their purpose, and the edict went forth. Wolstan Bransford was Bishop of Worcester at this time.

"We wish to confirm by the evidence of writing," begins the instrument of ordination, which is too long to quote in full, "those things which conduce to the praise of God. In our pastoral solicitude that a work so happily begun should be speedily perfected, we are constrained to have regard for the safety of the souls of the parishioners. By this instrument we ordain a salary for the vicar for ever ministering at that church and chapel," £10 per annum. "Also we will and decree that the vicar and his successors shall have that manse or messuage close to the cemetery of the said church on the south side, which manse or messuage is said to be part of the endowment of the said church ; in which manse or messuage the said religious, according to the state of the said vicarage, may cause buildings to be constructed, for whose construction or reparation, after they are once built, the said vicar shall be held liable, and we will that the religious shall be burdened no further." The instrument goes on to say that the vicar may have the small tithes of the parish excepting the tithes of corn and of the property of the monastery itself, whether they be small or large ; and he may have mortuaries and St. Peter's pence, "and the herbage and trees in the cemetery, and all the altar money." The tithes of corn were allotted to the monastery, and with them, says the deed, "the

oblations arising from the greater chapel at Kelmestowe." In return for this ordination on the part of the Bishop, the Abbot and Convent executed a deed on Nov. 13, 1344, covenanting to pay out of the revenue derived from Clent church two marks, or £1 6s. 8d., annually to the Bishop; and it appears also that another like amount was paid to the Church of Worcester perhaps to buy their consent to the appropriation, though it cannot be said how it came to have a voice in the matter.

From the mention of the greater chapel of Kelmestowe it may be gathered that there were two chapels at Kelmestowe, one of which was probably situated within the boundaries of Clent. But nothing further is found touching it, nor was it probably dependent at any time on the rector of Clent. St. Kenelm's church stood then, as it stands now, in Halesowen parish, and the chapel, though spoken of as "greater" than the church, was probably some chantry among the houses constituting the town of Kelmestowe, some of which must have been in the parish of Clent.

The present vicarage is not situated on the south of the church close to the churchyard, but one of the glebe fields occupies that situation. Some later vicar doubtless moved the vicarage to the place where it stands now, but there is no record of the change.

Up to this time there had been four rectors of Clent since Gilbert de Chaucombe. John de Honnesworth succeeded him on June 24th, 1317, and he in his turn was succeeded by John de Horseley on Sept. 12th, 1326. Both these were presented to the living by Roger de Somery. John de Honnesworth, or

Hundsworth, came doubtless from the village of that name, which belonged to the Somerys, and perhaps resigned Clent for some cause or other; for we find that on April 29th, 1339, a man of his name received permission from the Bishop "that in the rectory near his house at Walbrook in the parish of Halesowen, he may celebrate by a fit priest, but in a low voice, excluding the parishioners and other strangers, except guests, and without prejudice to the mother church." Lord Botetourt presented the next rector, Nicholas Jobbinol, on Dec. 3rd, 1339. In the Bishop's registers two rectors of the name of Northwell are next mentioned, the first, John de Northwell, rector also of Kingswinford, presented by Lord Botetourt in 1349, and the second, William de Northwell, presented by the Abbot of Halesowen on May 31st, 1344. But at the dates assigned to the presentation of these two rectors, not only had the monks obtained the advowson, but they had secured the rectory also, and any incumbent of Clent would then be only vicar. There is clearly some error here; but no doubt it was a time of much confusion in Clent church affairs, perhaps even induced by the monks themselves as an additional impulse to get Lord Botetourt to part with the advowson. They would tell him they could manage the matter better than a layman, and pray for his soul into the bargain; for the greed of the regular against the secular clergy was unbounded, and they stuck at nothing to gain their own ends.

The first vicar of Clent so noted in the registers was John Andrew, presented on April 1st, 1345. He was followed on July 29th, 1349, the year assigned above to the rectorate of Northwell, by John Buggyng,

who held the vicarage for nearly thirty years, when he was succeeded, April 10th, 1379, by John Carlas. All these were probably monks who lived at Halesowen Abbey, and came over to Clent at stated intervals to perform their vicarial duties. We may be pretty sure that the monks of Halesowen, out of the small means they complained about, would be in no hurry to rebuild the manse or messuage by the cemetery, on the south side of the church, as they were directed to do in the ordination of the vicarage.

Prosperous as England was at this time, and victorious over her enemies by land and sea, a great calamity was approaching, in which it, in common with the rest of Europe, became involved. The Black Death was steadily marching towards Europe from the East, and first made its appearance on the coast of Dorsetshire on August 1st, 1348. It travelled slowly northwards, and shortly overspread the whole country. It was terribly destructive, and is said to have destroyed a third of the entire population. Its ravages in Clent were extensive, as may be gathered from the return of a jury summoned on July 3rd, 1355, to enquire if it would be to the king's prejudice if certain new privileges relating to the manors of Mere and Clent were granted to Lord Botetourt. Whatever might be the purport of the transaction, its interest to us consists in the report of the jury, which contained no names which are recognisable as those of Clent men, but who say in their finding that the yearly sum due to the king from these two manors is £16 4s. 6d., and add that the manors "are worth by the year beyond the aforesaid £16 4s. 6d., in all issues 30 shillings, and no more by reason of the

pestilence." The profit to the lord from Clent alone, in years gone by, had been more than £4, so it can be well seen what an enormous depreciation in the value of property the plague caused. But this rent payable to the king does not correspond with that reserved in the grant to Lord Somery; then for the two manors he had to pay £12 13s. 4d. Nor does it correspond with the sum granted as the chief rent of Clent three years before to Hugh Wrottesley, which is even less than the amount Somery paid.

In 1352 Edward III. granted to Hugh Wrottesley, for his good services, a pension for life of £40 a year. Sir Hugh Wrottesley was a very famous man, and a great favourite with the king. He had attended the king during the French wars, and had been present with him at the battle of Cressy; he was also one of the original Knights of the Garter at the institution of that order. The £40 was made up of the chief rents of several manors, and among them the money due to the King from the manor of Clent every year. Clent and Mere were joined together in the estimate and provided £11 10s. 6d. The rest came from Kingswinford, Kinver, Tettenhall, and Teddesley, which made up the total sum to £40 1s. 6d. Sir Hugh Wrottesley died in 1381, when these rents would again revert to the King.

An old roll of manorial accounts of the time of Lord Botetourt is given in Nash's Worcestershire in Latin, but it is somewhat imperfect. I spoke of these rolls when treating of the lord's interest in the manor. The date is Michaelmas, 1363, when Thomas le Smyth, afterwards called in the same roll Thomas le Bailiff,

was the agent of the lord. He accounts for the rent of assize to the amount of £8 11s. 1½d. It is difficult to make out many of the items, but among the receipts of rents paid in kind were 3 quarters of oats, 12 capons, and 12 pullets; and among the disbursements 8d. for shoeing the Seneschal's horse. Four other names are mentioned, Thomas Sparry and Alice Webb, but their circumstances cannot be made out; while Henry de Bradburn paid two capons, and Richard Cordewayne received 30 shillings for work done. Corde-wayne is a name frequently met with in Clent records, even till comparatively late times, when it had become contracted down to Corden; a field in Clent is still called Corden's piece. Two other rolls of the same nature are in existence, on which are the dates 1488 and 1489.

I mentioned that Lord Botetourt bought six acres of land in Cowbach in Clent, in 1329, from Edmund de Hagley. In 1373 Henry de Hagley, who was Edmund's heir, recovered this property from Lord Botetourt, together with the manor and advowson of Hagley which had been bought at the same time.

As Lord Botetourt came into his estates when quite young, so he lived to be an old man, and died full of years in 1385. In his will he directed his body to be buried in the Abbey at Halesowen, for which he had done so much. He had been twice married, and by his second wife, daughter of Lord Zouche and Mortimer, had a son Thomas, who had died during his father's lifetime, in 1369. He had as well three daughters, Alice, Joyce, and Catherine; Alice and Catherine married respectively John Kyriel and Maurice Berke-

ley, while Joyce was married twice, first to Sir Baldwin Frevile, and secondly to Sir Adam Peshale. Thomas Botetourt, his son, had married Maud, daughter of Lord Grey of Rotherfield, and at his death left an only child, a daughter, married as second wife to Hugh, Lord Burnell. She was heir to her grandfather, and in right of his wife Lord Burnell became lord of the manor of Clent.

CHAPTER V.

CLENT IN LORD BURNELL'S TIME.

THOUGH the first onset of the plague was the most virulent, there were severe visitations of the pestilence in 1361 and 1369. The consequence of the plague was a dearth of labour, and in consequence of this wages rose, while much land went out of cultivation. And though the value of labour increased, the value of farming products remained stationary. The loss caused by the pestilence fell entirely upon the landowners, who strove wildly to regain their lost power and profits. Parliament passed a Statute of Labourers, which enacted that the same wages were to be received by all persons as were paid in the year before the visitation of the Black Death; and not only were those who demanded more to be sent to the common prison, but lords of manors paying more were rendered liable to a severe fine. This act, as a matter of course, failed in its object, and was continually being re-enacted with additional pains and penalties, sometimes against the employer and sometimes against the employed. And when this attempt to regulate the wages of labour proved useless, the lords attempted to turn backward a movement which had become widely spread. They endeavoured to prevent, and even to undo, arrangements for commuting labour payments into money payments. No doubt the impoverished landowners considered that the villeins and

serfs had no rights at all, and that they were only doing what they liked with their own. But all was of no effect; labour rose to two and three times its former price; and moreover the villeins and serfs who provided it began to feel their powers.

Moreover, owing to the preaching of Wiclif and the Lollards, people began to consider one man as good as another. Certain orders of monks had been founded whose mission it was to go about the country tending the sick, and counteracting, if possible, the abuses which had crept into the monasteries. They could acquire no property, and they became the confidants of the mass of the people. Lollardism was very rife in the diocese of Worcester*, and no doubt found adherents in Clent, where the people's eyes would be constantly fixed on the rapacity of the monks of Halesowen, for they were suffering practically from it in receiving only the ministrations of a vicar, while they saw their tithes annually swept away by the agents of the Abbey. Men's minds were filled with a religious socialism, and were in that condition when merely a spark is needed to cause an explosion.

That spark was afforded by poll-taxes levied by the king, which had become exceedingly onerous and unfair. The serfs rose in 1381; the outburst began in Kent, where an outrage by a tax-collector on Wat Tyler's daughter, and the vengeance he took upon the wrongdoer, proved the beginning of the insurrection. From Kent to Scarborough in the east, from Hampshire to Lancashire in the west, it spread over all the land, for the minds of men had been prepared for it

* Diocesan Histories. I. G. Smith's *Worcester*, p. 96.

by the Lollard missionaries ; and though the death of Tyler, and the prompt deceit of King Richard II. quelled the tumult, and stern vengeance was exacted upon the rebels, the victory remained with them. Upon the Lollards also fell the vengeance of the governing classes. The commutation of labour rents went on apace, and the spirit of remonstrance against monks and their doings still lived.

Such was the state of things when Lord Burnell came into the possession of the Manor of Clent. Discontented tenants, falling rents, increased price of labour, land going out of cultivation, were the inheritance of his wife.

Some few words upon the state of the parish as regards enclosures and agriculture generally are necessary, that we may form some idea of the face of the village at this time. No man, when he plants a hedge for the boundary of a field, plants it crooked, nor does he make the field of a fantastic shape, unless he is obliged to do either of these things from the nature of the ground. He makes his hedges straight, and his enclosures as regular in shape as possible. But in course of time the line of a hedgerow becomes uneven, just as a footpath across a field becomes irregular, and bends from side to side in little curves. These irregularities may not be noticeable on the face of the country itself, but when the lines of hedgerows are laid down by accurate measurement on a map the unevenness becomes very apparent. Besides, small fields are often thrown into large ones, and the intervening fences stocked up, so that the resulting enclosures are of various shapes, and the fences have sharp bends and

turns in them. On looking at the map of a district, then, we may assume that enclosures have existed longest where fences and fields are most irregular; and where the lines of fence are straight and even the enclosures have been made in later times. Applying this test to the map of Clent, the oldest enclosed parts are seen to be those about Pen Orchard and Walton, and in the close neighbourhood of Lower Clent. Of all the country in the neighbourhood the fields between Walton Hill and Uffmore Wood are the most irregular and smallest, and here probably was the land earliest cultivated in enclosed fields. On the west side of the hills the fields are much more regular, while below Thicknall, where we know the land was enclosed something more than a hundred years ago, the hedges still exist in perfectly straight lines. It is true that the fields on Calcott Hill, some of which was enclosed two hundred years ago, are irregular, but this may well be accounted for by the hilly nature of the ground. Probably, then, at the time of which I am now writing, the bulk of the land in the hilly district was already cut up into enclosures, while the flatter portion of the parish was open common, parcelled out in different places into large common fields. Some of these, it can be gathered, were of large extent: Ryfle's, or Ryfold's, Field extended for a considerable distance along the boundary of the parish of Hagley, on either side of the turnpike road, such widely distant plots of land as the present Dead Marsh and Cobby Hazels, half a mile apart, being contained in it; while the Horsalls, the Windens, and the Crossfields were also open and unenclosed spaces of cultivated land. In the Horsalls and

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the Windens the present disposition of the hedge-rows shews how the fields have been laid out on either side of a central lane, and in many other parts of the parish the same arrangement is evident. There also existed at the same period doubtless several large enclosures of pasture-land, over which all the tenants of the manor had a right of pasturing a certain number of cattle at certain periods of the year, or where they could mow and make an allotted portion of hay, in which the rights of each tenant were called their "stints." In the common arable fields each tenant possessed a strip of land, so many furrows wide, the divisions being separated by unploughed ridges called "balks." The Winden fields in Clent just mentioned were, until the last few years, a surviving example of this arrangement. Lying undivided from the rest of the fields, and marked out only by stones, were some long, narrow strips of land belonging to the trustees of the Church of Clent, and it is only since they have been sold to the owner of the rest of the land that these relics of antiquity have become merged and lost.

I have said that land was going out of cultivation when Lord Burnell became owner of Clent. I think it is not difficult to point to some of this land. The fields into which the hilly part of the parish was divided spread over a considerable portion of what is now Clent Hill Common. Ridges traverse the common in all directions, which it is evident are old hedge-banks. Especially marked is one running up the eminence called Knoll Hill, on the northern side of the road to St. Kenelm's from Clent Church. That its origin had been forgotten so long ago as 1678, when

Dr. Plot, in his "History of Staffordshire," described Clent, is evidenced by the fact that he gives a legendary cause for it. It was made, he says, by the runaway yoke of oxen of an old woman, who in defiance of all morality persisted in ploughing on St. Kenelm's Day. The oxen, in their disgust at such sacrilege, disappeared up the hill, dragging the plough after them, and so St. Kenelm's furrow, as he calls it, was made, while the oxen were no more seen, the old woman at the same time losing her eyes. But this legend is clearly a popular tale founded on the fact that the hill-side was once ploughed land, while the bolting of the oxen was a fanciful way of saying that its condition arose from its being left unploughed. Two fields close by are still called Hither and Far Knoll.

These old hedge-banks are certainly the boundaries of land that has gone out of cultivation a long time ago, and probably it was after the Black Death that they became waste. An old deed of Lord Burnell's is extant, of the time of King Henry IV., about 1400 possibly, granting to Richard Hull, John Sanyn, Richard Sparry of Walton, Henry Thykenol, and the rest of the customary tenants of his manor of Clent, all the waste ground in the manor, "So that the aforesaid waste may be in common among the tenants, may be in no way enclosed, and may be held and enjoyed by them and their heirs for ever." I am inclined to think that this is a formal dedication on the part of the lord of the manor of the ground on the hill which had gone out of cultivation and become waste to the same uses as the rest of the lords' waste. The free tenants would have, as a matter of common law, their rights over all the

ancient waste in the manor, and if this deed related to such land it would have been unnecessary ; but there is good reason for it if its object was to make of some service to the people of Clent land which had hopelessly gone out of ordinary cultivation.

Waste land stretched far and wide over the country round Clent at this time. Clent Hill, Walton Hill, and Calcott Hill were all waste ground with no fence intervening ; to the south, Bell Heath and much of Belbroughton was unenclosed ; to the west the Bleak Down, whose name is now modified into Blakedown, stretched from Thicknall to Wannerton. On the east probably large portions of Romsley were in the same condition, undivided by any fence from the commons in Clent. The cattle belonging to the tenants of one manor strayed, and were sometimes driven, on to the waste of another manor, causing endless disputes. In 1410, the jurors of the Romsley Manor Court complained that John Sanyn and William Hill of Calcott Hill brought their cattle on to the waste of Romsley without permission, and doubtless the tenants of Romsley frequently so managed it that the cool valleys of the Clent Hills provided pasture for their animals instead of their own more arid wastes. In later years, it appears from the Court Rolls that the inhabitants of Broom did the same with regard to the common at the western end of the manor, one Harris, of that parish, being a continual offender.

But although the wages of labour were high at the time, the several visitations of the plague had caused extended poverty. In 1370, William of Bromsgrove, Abbot of Halesowen, died, and a roll of the expenses

attending his funeral is in existence. Among the disbursements is the sum of £2 12s. 11d. which was expended in charity. And we are told that it was distributed in sums of one penny each to any who came for it on the day of the funeral. What a greedy crowd of starving people, clustering round the gate of the Abbey this item shews to us! No less than 635 persons thought it worth while to journey to the monastery in the hope of getting a penny! The number would be great even in this day; in the thinly populated country in which it occurred the number is enormous. No doubt many of them had walked over the hills from Clent.

The life of a villager in these times was a ceaseless round of labour, and for grown-up people at least, one from which there was little chance of escape; yet for some favoured youth the Church sometimes afforded an opening. There were many ways in which a clever lad could gain the notice of the monks of a neighbouring monastery, and making the best of his opportunities become a priest. By some such means a Clent lad, known afterwards as Walter de Clent, became Vicar of Hanley Castle, being presented thereto by the monks of Great Malvern Priory on Nov. 23, 1420. He was already probably well advanced in years, for 14 years later he resigned the living, having lost the use of his left arm by a fall, and being old and very infirm. He reserved to himself a pension of £5 13s. 4d. a year, and we can imagine the old priest coming back to his native parish and passing the few remaining years of his life among his kinsfolk in the village from which he gained his surname.

During these years another encroachment on the part of the monks was in progress in the parish. By some means the church of Clent had become possessed of certain chief rents, which were the fixed payments rendered by freeholders to their lord, in that part of the parish lying beyond Walton, called Calcott Hill. How this arrangement originated is not clear, and it is not improbable that as soon as the monks interested themselves in Clent affairs they were not particularly anxious that it ever should be clear, for it was the beginning of an infringement of the rights of the lord. No record of any grant of these rents is known, nor does it appear that any annual rent was paid to the superior lord on account of them. But that the church of Clent possessed tenants and rents in Clent at the time of the ordination of the vicarage is evident from certain reservations therein mentioned. To the monastery was reserved the "duties and temporal services whatsoever of the tenants of the said church which the tenants may render as the oblations of the said church." And when they thus became possessed of the rents, they quietly allowed the portion of the parish in which they arose to grow into a manor; and as it is difficult to say in the case of anything when the period of growth has ceased, the exact time when the manor now known as Church Clent actually arose cannot be ascertained. Not only does its name shew its original connection with the church, but at the present time nearly all the glebe belonging to the living is contained in its limits, a detached portion of the glebe some distance from the rest lying in a detached portion of the manor also. The monks do not appear ever to have actually

owned any of this land. It was rent only, the seed of a manor if they only had patience for it to come to maturity. This it did, though they did not long enjoy the fruits of it.

Four vicars of Clent were presented to the living during Lord Burnell's life, all monks. They were Robert Atherstone, on May 16th, 1392; Thomas Paas, on March 23rd, 1400; Thomas Lenyot, on Feb. 28th, 1415; and Henry Broke, on Feb. 28th, 1420.

Joyce Burnell died without children on Jan. 1st, 1405, and left Lord Burnell in the enjoyment of her property for the rest of his life; but at his death it would fall to be divided among her three aunts. In addition to Clent, there were many adjoining manors which went to form the whole estate, and for some reason or other Joan Beauchamp, Lady Bergavenny, began to negotiate for their purchase. She was the daughter of Richard Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, and widow of William Beauchamp, one of that powerful family which so long flourished in the Midland Counties. Her husband had died in 1411, and it appears that sometime after his death she bought the reversion to two-thirds of the property of Joyce Burnell from the heirs of two of that lady's aunts, Alice and Joyce, and this arrangement was confirmed by Lord Burnell as the holder of the property, by deed dated December 1st, 1417. Three years after, on Nov. 27th, 1420, Lord Burnell died, leaving no children, and by his will he directed his body to be buried in Halesowen Abbey.

There is a curious petition relating to Joan, Lady Bergavenny, among the public records. It seems she lived at Hunnington in Worcestershire, a village

adjoining Clent, and while journeying thither from London on the 17th March, 1431, she was attacked near Birmingham by Lord Ferrers of Chartley, when she was resting on account of the infirmity of her body. Lord Ferrers' followers killed John Brydde, one of the "vallettes de sa chaumbre," and many of their arrows stuck in the poor old lady's gown, and caused her, as might be supposed, "graund damage e discomfort." She makes complaint of this to the Duke of Gloucester, but what the Duke was able to do for her does not appear^b.

^b *The Genealogist*, N.S., iv. p. 174,

CHAPTER VI.

THE WAR OF THE ROSES.

LADY BERGAVENNY seems to have enjoyed her two-thirds of Joyce Burnell's property in peace until her death on Nov. 14, 1435. Soon after 1412 she had bought the manor and advowson of Hagley from Thomas Walwyn of Much Marcle in Herefordshire, who had become possessed of it by purchase from Henry de Hagley in that year, and with it the six acres of land in Cowbach in Clent became her property*. She left a will giving her share of Clent with other property to her grandson, the Earl of Ormonde, son of her daughter, Elizabeth Beauchamp. But two years afterwards Maurice Berkeley, the grandson of Catherine Botetourt, who married a Berkeley of the same Christian name, who had become entitled to one-third of the property, laid claim to the whole of it. Whatever was the point of the claim, litigation went on for some time, and was finally terminated by a division of the property in dispute in which Clent fell to the share of the Earl of Ormonde.

During the early part of the century prosperous times had set in for England. The reverses of the army in France had little effect upon the country itself. Doubtless the country people knew but little of the struggle which was going on across the sea, though probably strange tales of the Maid of Orleans echoed through the peaceful villages of central England. But

* See p. 49.

all this was taking place so very far off, and the buying and selling, and ploughing and reaping in the country villages went on as usual. The means of life were cheap, and wages high, and a spirit of enterprise was springing up in men's minds. The wars affected only the nobles and the professional soldiers; the villagers were more concerned with their manor courts, and the ever-present monk, grasping and snatching for the neighbouring monastery.

In 1430 an Act was passed restricting the right of voting in the counties to freeholders the annual value of whose property was forty shillings and upwards, a sum equivalent in the present day to something like £20. Up to this time all who attended the Sheriff's court voted without question for the Knight of the Shire, but by this enactment a great proportion of the voters consisting of the leaseholders and copyholders found themselves disfranchised.

Soon after the war in France had been brought to a termination, the rival claims of the houses of York and Lancaster began to convulse the ranks of the barons. But this was a matter which did not seem to affect the mass of the people. It was little to them who sat on the throne so far above their heads, so they stood by with languid indifference, taking little notice of the battles which were fought in scattered places, and themselves continuing their ordinary avocations. Perhaps the incidents of the struggle were brought a little nearer home to the people of Clent than to many other country communities, not indeed from the presence of war in their midst, but because their lord was deeply involved in the struggle. The

Earl of Ormonde was a devoted Lancastrian, and for his services to King Henry VI. had been created in 1449 Earl of Wiltshire. The wars in France had been conducted by means of a paid soldiery, the funds for whose services were largely provided by *Scutages*, or composition moneys paid by the lords of manors in lieu of following the king for forty days, as the feudal arrangement was. But the battles in the War of the Roses were fought by the armed retainers of the barons involved in the contest, and when the Earl of Wiltshire went forth to fight he took with him those of his tenants who were still bound to render military service to their lord. We cannot doubt that many Clent men followed his fortunes and were with him on Towton Field. The battle of Towton was fought in 1461, and ended in the total defeat of the Lancastrians. The Earl of Wiltshire was taken prisoner, and beheaded at Newcastle-on-Tyne, on May 1, 1461, and all his property was seized by the king.

During the troublous times of these wars the manor of Clent changed owners frequently, as much other landed property in England did. It is said that one-fifth of all the land in England passed into royal possession at one time or another during this period. The king was not long before he parcelled out the estate of the Earl of Wiltshire among his own adherents, and he granted Clent with Mere, and several other manors in the neighbourhood, to Fulke Stafford, the third son of Sir Ralph Stafford of Grafton, near Bromsgrove. He, however, did not enjoy it long, for he died childless the following year, when the manor again reverted to the king, with the exception of one-

third, which Fulke Stafford's widow Margaret held in dower.

In 1463 the king gave the two-thirds of the manor he had in his possession and the reversion of the remaining third to Sir Walter Wrottesley, great grandson of Sir Hugh Wrottesley, to whom the chief rent of the manor had been given by King Edward III. Three years he received a fresh grant of the property with some additional manors, the occasion being probably the death of Margaret Stafford, when to make himself doubly secure he would obtain a fresh grant of the whole. Sir Walter died in 1473, but it does not seem that Clent passed to his eldest son according to the terms of his patent, for in 1475 the king granted it to Sir Humphrey Stafford of Grafton, the great nephew of the former possessor of that surname. In this grant of the manor to Humphrey Stafford we can perhaps discern the influence of his greater namesake and distant kinsman, Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, who took a leading part in the politics of this time, and afterwards headed a rising in Wales against King Richard III., but being captured was executed in 1483. Two years later Humphrey Stafford of Grafton lost his head on the block after the battle of Bosworth; for he was a strong adherent of the Yorkist party, and King Henry VII. brought to the throne all the bitter feelings of the Lancastrians. So Clent came again into the king's possession, and the Lancastrian party being in the ascendant, it was granted to Thomas, Earl of Ormonde, nephew of the Earl of Wiltshire, the attainder against his family being reversed by parliament in the first year of the reign of King Henry VII.

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During the whole of this time, however, we get no glimpse of the people of Clent. They had their part in the general history of the country, but it is only by light reflected from this that we are able to form any idea of their condition. The War of the Roses utterly destroyed the power of the barons, and proved to be the commencement of modern England. Manorial life went on in the villages, and the tenants still did their fealty at the manor courts ; but labour rents had now universally merged into money payments and rents in kind also. These courts were at this time realities with real power, not like the Court Leets of modern days, which are mere ghosts of a former state of things. More than a hundred and fifty years later we find distresses taken and sold by the Court Baron of Nether Clent.

In the year 1470 occurs the first charitable bequest to Clent of which record remains. Forty pence were given to Clent Church by the will of Richard Penn, of Harberrow, in the parish of Hagley, and the same testator left various sums to the churches of neighbouring parishes. At this time a family named Penn was living at Pen Orchard, from which locality they probably took their name ; and this bequest shews that the Penns of Harberrow had a connection with Clent which they may have derived from relationship with this family. Penns lived at Harberrow continuously for three hundred years after this date.

The names of four vicars of Clent are recorded during this period, and they are John Duffield, presented Dec. 28th, 1423 ; Richard Hull, February, 1455 ; John Hay, July 26th, 1468 ; and John Seed, July 13th, 1485.

Of these John Hay was afterwards Abbot of Halesowen, and perhaps resigned his vicarage on his appointment, when John Seed became vicar. But it does not appear to have been necessary that an abbot should resign his cure; and this may be gathered from the fact that the Prior and Convent of Worcester in 1510 presented the Abbot of Halesowen, then named Edmund Green, to the vicarage of Wolverley. Nor does it appear that John Hay lost his claim to the vicarage of Clent, for on his resigning the abbacy he was again instituted vicar of Clent in December, 1489. We know that he did resign his abbacy, since a list of the monks for the year 1517 contains the name of John Hay "formerly Abbot." In a list of 1478 John Seed, afterwards vicar of Clent, was the junior monk but one.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISSOLUTION OF HALESOWEN ABBEY.

WE are obliged to talk of the stately Abbey of Halesowen as we write the history of Clent. It will not keep out of the story. As the monks in their time were ever present in the parish pushing and grasping, so now even, when the monks and their belongings have passed away for hundreds of years, their personality weighs upon us and we must speak of them.

A rental of the Abbey for the year 1500 is still extant, and in it Clent is mentioned. The value of the rectory in that year is set down as £5 10s.; but this seems an absurdly small sum, since sixty years before a ninth of the incumbency had been worth £10. It looks as if the monks had performed some abstruse arithmetical calculation, which satisfied them that the rectorial tithes were worth no more than this amount to them; though fifteen years after the dissolution of the Abbey the tithes were still held by persons who had taken them on lease from the last Abbot for £5 6s. 8d. per annum. There was a pool belonging to the rectory which was considered to be of sufficient value to be mentioned in the return, and a croft of land. Perhaps it is the same pool which still adds beauty to the vicarage garden.

The monks return also a sum of £1 12s. per annum for "rents of assize" at Clent. The rents of the land

at Calcott Hill had now very nearly grown into manor-rents; at all events they had assumed the name. "These rents are received by the vicar to hold at the pleasure of the abbot," is added. The fiction of their belonging to the church is still kept up, but among other degradations inflicted on the Vicar of Clent, he was now little better than the abbot's bailiff.

But a time of retribution for monastic institutions was rapidly approaching. Puffed up by the increase of their worldly possessions, they gave way to profuse and riotous living, and in some cases became dens of wickedness. Halesowen was as bad as any of them. The reports of the superiors who visited the abbey from time to time shew to what a depth of depravity some of the monks had come, and mention the most horrible crimes. In 1496 some of the monks had headed an insurrection of the young men of Halesowen against the abbot and the vicar; and when charged three of the monks did not deny their culpability; and whether this was an outburst of indignation against the evil living of the monks, or a lawless disturbance egged on by the evildoers themselves, it shews great looseness at all events in the management of the monastery. In 1517, the visiting abbot, Robert Bedall of Shap, reports that though he found nothing criminal at Halesowen, there were many fallings away in the matter of spiritual life.

The moral state of these institutions, which had been pointed out as the natural prey of the government by the Lollards in times gone by, and by interested nobles in later periods, afforded King Henry VIII. the opportunity he wished to possess himself of their great

wealth. His vast expenditure had emptied his treasury, his quarrel with the pope disposed his mind to revenge himself on institutions directly representing the papacy. In 1524 Wolsey obtained from the king an order to suppress more than forty monasteries and nunneries; in 1535 all were suppressed whose income was under £200 a year, and in 1538 all the remaining houses were dissolved and their possessions confiscated. The estimate of the possessions of Halesowen Abbey in 1535, when Cromwell, who after the fall of Wolsey became the king's right-hand man, appointed a commission to enquire into the affairs of the monks and nuns, is still extant; and in it we find the rectory of Clent entered as being worth £5 6s. 8d. a year. We find also an entry of the two sums of £1 6s. 8d. paid by the monastery to the Bishop of Worcester and the Prior of St. Mary's at Worcester, being the price of obtaining the rectory of Clent. Another annual payment by the monastery was £5 to a chaplain to celebrate mass for the repose of the souls of the founders in the chapel of St. Kenelm, situated "beneath a certain mountain called Clent Hill," the record says. Two of those who had benefited the little chapel were Margery Kelmestowe, who gave three shillings a year to the curate of the chapel and his successors in 1418; and William Stamps, who in 1468 gave a croft of ground called Fillaughton towards the maintenance of the chaplain at St. Kenelm's.

And so at last the end came. The suppression was managed quietly but effectually; no armed troops flashed down the quiet lanes, demanding possession in the name of the king; there was no pulling down

of barricades, nor bursting in of oaken doors ; only some old notary went to the abbey with his parchments and his ink-horn. In the dry legal manner in which lesser estates passed from hand to hand the possessions of the abbey passed to the king. It was in 1538, "fifteen days after Easter," that a little knot of men assembled in one of the chambers of the abbey and witnessed William Taylor, who was then the abbot, sign the little bit of parchment which gave not only land but goods and chattels also to the king. The existing monks were provided for during their lives by small annual sums, and then they left the abbey to moulder and decay, and to form a convenient stone-quarry for generations to come. All that now remains of it are a few broken arches and crumbling walls.

The property of the abbey thus coming into the king's hands, it was granted the same year to John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, who had been created Duke of Northumberland. He was a man who had connection with this neighbourhood. What his descent was is unknown. His father was Edmund, Lord Dudley, who was beheaded in 1509, and his grandfather, or great-grandfather, it is supposed, occupied the humble rank of carpenter in the town of Dudley. At any rate the Duke of Northumberland wished to be considered as descending from the old Somerys, and their successors in the lands of that family, the Sutton Dudleys ; and by some means having got possession of the barony and castle of Dudley from the last Lord Dudley of that line, he had put into his title Baron de Somery, and adorned the gate-house of the castle with a new coat of arms, displaying the bearings of that family,

quite in the manner of the newly-rich of the present time. The whole of the property of the monks was to be held by the service of the twentieth part of a knight's fee, and a yearly rent of £28 1s. 6d. So the Duke of Northumberland became possessed of the advowson and rectory of Clent, and of the newly-arisen manor of Church Clent.

Thomas, Earl of Ormonde, to whom Clent had been given in 1485, married a daughter of Sir Richard Hankford, and died 1515, leaving two daughters, of whom the eldest married Sir James St. Leger of An-nary, in Devonshire, and she when her father died succeeded to Clent. Her younger sister married Sir William Boleyn, and became mother of Anne Boleyn, King Henry VIII.'s ill-fated queen. The St. Legers were a well-known Devonshire family. Who that has read *Westward Ho!* does not remember the beautiful Miss St. Leger who became Lady Grenville, wife of Sir Richard Grenville of the little "Revenge?" The manor of Clent remained the property of the St. Legers until it was bought by Sir John Lyttelton, in 1564, from Sir John St. Leger, grandson of Sir James.

John Hay, the ex-Abbot of Halesowen, remained Vicar of Clent till 1502, when he was succeeded on Feb. 23rd of that year by William Hampton, the last parson who was presented to the living by the monks of Halesowen. For some time there had been monks of this surname at the abbey, and some of them had been the worst of the numerous evil-doers there. He held the living till Oct. 8th, 1549, when Thomas Gaunt, the nominee of the Duke of Northumberland, succeeded him.

The ordinary mode of agriculture in England at this time, as it had been for centuries past, was a three-course system, consisting of wheat in the first year, oats, barley, beans, peas, or vetches in the second, and a bare fallow in the third. Roots and artificial grasses were not introduced for some time after this, and the system of open fields made it impossible to pen sheep upon the land. Cattle and sheep were kept under cover from November to May, for the simple reason that there was no forage for them out of doors; and although it had been recognised that land was worth much more in the shape of small enclosures, the conservatism of the agriculturists was averse to any change, and the old system continued.

But for one purpose enclosures began to take place. In the early part of the sixteenth century arable fields were largely laid down to pasture for the purpose of sheep breeding. Wool was dear; and to such an extent did this practice reach, that Acts of Parliament were directed against it. In 1515 an Act was passed ordering these pasture-lands to be restored to tillage; in 1533 another Act limited the number of sheep to be kept by one person to 2,000, and that there may be no doubt about the number, sheep were to be reckoned, not by the long hundred of six score, but by the hundred of five score only. Flocks of 20,000 and 24,000 are mentioned in the Act, but any excess above the legal number was penalised by a fine of 3*s.* 4*d.* a head, half of which was to be received by the common informer, while the other half was to go to the king. But the decay of agriculture went on in spite of the Acts of Parliament which continued to be passed,

and in 1536 a new statute ordered all landowners to provide suitable buildings for every holding let to a tenant of over thirty acres. But the price of wheat kept continuously rising; the king issued debased money, and pauperism increased.

The Reformation in England was a period of change, not a sudden transformation. It is often thought of as an alteration in the religion of England, something as if people went to bed some night Roman Catholics, and woke up next morning Protestants. But really there was nothing of this kind. King Henry VIII. was never anything but a Catholic, and what is called the reformation was a steadily growing hostility to the papacy rather than any change of faith. If a date is wanted to affix to the Reformation, the most convenient one, perhaps, is the date of the Act of Supremacy, by which Henry was declared Supreme Head of the English Church, and papal authority in England entirely annulled; and this Act was passed in 1534. But this was only the culmination of a series of ordinances limiting the power of Rome, the desire to effect which was induced in the king's mind by his anxiety to procure a divorce from Catherine of Arragon, which Rome would not grant him, but the English Church would. It is difficult to know if any echo of these proceedings reached such a secluded village as Clent; the people there were probably more concerned with the fate of the neighbouring monastery than with any views on the papal supremacy. We find from the wills of Clent people that long after this date they went on leaving sums of money to the high altar in the church as they had doubtless done in times

gone by. The Reformation in matters of faith apart from the constitution of the Church was a very gradual change, and no sudden gulf developed itself between Roman Catholics and Protestants; the latter at first protested only against the jurisdiction of a foreign ecclesiastic in this England of ours.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EARLY COURT ROLLS.

THE first Court Roll now in existence is that for a court held on March 27th, 1520, the 8th year of Henry VIII. Twenty-five rolls exist for the reign of this king, the last one being for a court held in the year 1532; but they do not appear to be continuous, there being no roll for the year 1528. Courts were held, as a rule, twice in each year. The jury, or homage, usually consisted of 14 to 16 tenants of the manor, and the rolls commence with a list of those persons who were "essoined," or excused from attendance, and a second list gives the names of those who had failed to put in an appearance without being excused, the fine for such default being *2d*. For each year four officers were appointed, a constable, a bailiff, and two ale tasters. Once at all events during this period the jury disagreed, and were ordered, I suppose, by the lord's steward, who was always the presiding officer, to remain in the custody of the bailiff. The rolls are all in Latin, but unusual words have their English equivalent given.

The business of the court was to deal with petty assaults, breaches of order, trespasses by tenants on the customs of the manor or the holdings of others, and the surrenders of and admissions to property on the part of the tenants. The fine for a common assault

was 2*d.*, and if blood was drawn, 6*d.* The people seem to have been a turbulent lot, for assaults and bloodshed were very frequent. In later times the instrument used was sometimes specified, and the value of it added to the fine. The names of many "common breakers of fences" are given, often those of women, the fine for which offence was usually 4*d.* But perhaps the subject which mostly occupied the attention of the court at this period was the maintenance in proper order of the various ditches and watercourses in the manor. The use of water for purposes of agriculture seems to have been far more general in early days than it is at present, for in many places in the parish traces remain of the old ditches by which the water of the most insignificant streamlets was led about the neighbouring land. It was of course of the highest importance to those on the lower levels that those who had command of the water above should allow a proper amount to reach them. So we get very numerous entries on this subject. In 1520 the Abbot of Hales had a defect in his ditch in Upper Clent, and he was ordered to keep the water out of the king's way there, under a penalty of 3*s.* 4*d.* The Vicar of Clent in the same year had made so high a bank that the water overflowed into the Tansy-lane, the present road leading from the Vicarage to Holy Cross. He was to take the bank away, or be fined 2*s.* Five offences of this kind are specially alluded to in this roll, and the subject is finally dismissed with a general injunction to all the tenants to put their ditches in order before Pentecost, under a penalty of 12*d.* each. Something to do with the watercourses is found in nearly every roll.

In 1525 several tenants dug clay in the Winden-lane, causing the water to overflow the road. In 1526 Richard Sparry diverted the water at Cotland-bridge, between the bounds of Staffordshire and Worcester-shire. This locality can be identified at the present day, though the adjoining field is now called Scotland, since it is here that Clent and Belbroughton, at that date in the counties mentioned, touch each other; and the brook still runs down by the roadside. In 1529 the Vicar was again in default, in not repairing the ditch near Horsewall-lane. In 1530 Richard Sparry built a dam in the land of the Abbot of Hales, called King's meadow, as he had done before in 1522, and had caused the water to flow over some land belonging to William Hart, called Alston Jenks. In each case the offender was ordered to rectify matters. Apparently, between Pentecost and Michaelmas a tenant could divert the water on to his own land for six days only at a time.

The orders of the court in matters concerning the tenants of the manor were either founded upon, or became customs of the manor. All gates, gaps, and fences round the spring-sown fields had to be put in order before the Sunday after Whitsuntide, and round the winter-sown fields by St. Luke's Day; and for each gate and gap in defect the responsible person had to pay 2*d.* and 8*d.* respectively. The bailiff's duty was from time to time to take with him four good and responsible tenants to see that all was in proper order; and sometimes the jury went in a body. Many orders relate to the waste land. Thomas Sparry in 1526 turned more swine, which are called "animals not

commonable," on to the common than his due number, which seems to have been 16, for he was ordered for the future not to keep more than that number, under a penalty of 6s. 8d. In 1530 William Palmer offended by overloading the common with his "Capulls," or horses; and it seems that a person who held a "plough" of land might turn out 4 horses, and a cottager 2 and no more. No one could turn out on to the common pasture more than 80 sheep for each virgate of land, under a penalty of 20s. Tenants were obliged to be very careful of the divisions between their own portions of the common fields and those of their neighbours, and many penalties were incurred by ploughing over them. They were not to drive their sheep on to the common fields till the last load had been carried 12 days, nor to remove the fences to let sheep through till the fields had been declared open for 6 days, under a penalty of 40d.; and if one removed the fence of another, he was fined 12d. One order of the court forbids any tenant to keep "anatas," which possibly means ducks.

Although there was probably no large timber on the higher parts of the hills, brushwood grew on the lower portions, which was the perquisite of the lord, except so much as the tenants required to mend their fences. Persons are continually being fined for cutting underwood to burn, for which a penalty of 40d. was enforced against them. Holly, thorns, and maples are mentioned. Scythe-making was an early trade of the Clent people, for in 1520 the court ordered a penalty of 3s. 4d. against every artificer called a scythe-maker who collected necessities for his art

within the manor without permission. Encroachments were not seldom made on the common, and were ordered to be thrown open under penalties apparently varying with their magnitude. In 1530 Richard Underhill and Margaret Loberich built pigstyes on the waste, and were fined 40*d.* each.

Of the miscellaneous subjects dealt with by the court the following are examples. In 1521 Sibilla, daughter of Thomas Hill, of Kidderminster, and Elena, wife of John Hill, of Stourbridge, both sold fleeces to a certain Thomas Nash, thereby no doubt infringing upon the lord's right to toll; and it is probable that the price would have been forfeited to him had the jury been able to discover what it was, for they especially say they don't know it. In the same year a well at Walton was in dispute, and the matter was terminated by the jury ordering William White to let Thomas Sparry's wife, boys, and servants to have water from it, or to pay 6*s.* 8*d.* Persons were ordered to mend their roads and lop their trees from time to time; and in case of the ownership of trees being in dispute, the jury decided to whom they belonged. The Abbot of Hales claimed a tree growing near St. Kenelm's Chapel in 1532, and the jury said that it grew within the Manor of Clent, and did not belong to him.

The comparatively fenceless condition of the country led to the frequent straying of animals, which were publicly proclaimed at three several times, kept for a year and a day, and if then unclaimed, were the perquisite of the lord of the manor. The jurors at the termination of that time valued them, when they

were either delivered to the lord, or taken by the person in whose keeping they were at the valuation put upon them. The animals were mostly sheep, and in the twelve years to which these rolls relate there were thirteen of these. Their colour is usually specified, either white or black, and it would, therefore, seem that in the flocks there were sufficient black sheep to make the description necessary: it could not be presumed that they were always white. In 1525 John Loberich was fined 12*d.* because he put his own mark on a lamb that came astray with its mother, probably before the court had dealt with it. It is recorded that the mother had died, and as Loberich seems to have been a butcher, its death may not have been altogether natural. Of other animals that came astray in the same period were three pigs, six horses, and one cow. Bees must have been largely kept, for five swarms, *apiaria*, to which the English is always appended, "a byke of bees," came astray within this time. The value of a swarm was 6*d.*

Some offences greater than mere affrays or assaults were taken notice of by the court. For instance, Alice Sparry in 1522, "*vi et armis*" stole a certain *linthiamen*, in English "a shete," from John White; and in 1525 Agnes Smith stole some *maniteria*, called "napkyns." In 1521 it is recorded that William Blakmore, servant of Thomas Sparry, of Walton, feloniously took 8*d.* from the house of John Kelseck two years previously; and on Monday, October 27th, 1522, Simon Sever, a labourer of Clent, broke and entered the house of Urian Dun and took 16*d.* But these entries seem matters of record only, as no fines were imposed, nor

does it appear what afterwards became of the offenders. In one roll it is recorded that William Hart had in his possession 6s. of the goods and chattels of a certain William, the miller of the Nether mill, who had committed a felony and fled; and he had to account to the lord for the money.

Bad behaviour is noticed. In 1529, Alice Smith and Margaret "Nigra" are returned as common malefactors, and were ordered to move themselves out of the parish, under penalty of 3s. 4d.; and the like penalty was imposed on any person who received them into their house. But they did not go, for the next year Alice Smyth and "Black" Margaret were still in Clent. Another year Hugh Jenyns and Margaret Fowler were returned as living suspiciously. Richard Heathe, in 1526, is accused of harbouring paupers and vagabonds; and in one roll Joyce, the wife of John Whyte, is accused of being a "common scold" (*garrulatrix*), and got off with a fine of 6s. 8d. Perhaps there was no ducking-stool in the parish.

In most of the rolls are the records of surrenders of and admissions to copyhold holdings in the manor—holdings to which the "copy" of the roll was the title-deed of the tenant. The jurors also report the deaths of tenants, what was the heriot due thereupon to the lord, and in the case of its being a cow, horse, or sheep, what its colour and value were; who was the next heir, and what was his age, and what fine he ought to pay. This was usually one year's rent.

One more class of entry remains to be noticed. The function of the aletasters was to see that those who sold beer sold a wholesome article, and sold it by

fair measures, those who offended being said to "break the assize." Anybody could brew who liked, and the licensing system of the present day, though it had been foreshadowed, and the seed of it might be said to have been sown, was not yet in existence. The ale-tasters made a presentment at nearly every court. In 1520 Alice Wheeler sold beer by an insufficient measure. John Nash, who united with the trade of barber the beer-selling business, no doubt supplying his customers during their visits to his shop, is returned over and over again as breaking assize. As many as ten or more offenders are mentioned in a year, and are fined 2*d.* or 4*d.* each; which shows that many beer sellers tried to take advantage of their customers, and that, if the fine imposed is a measure of their gains they did not get much by their endeavour.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER THE REFORMATION.

ONCE past the period of the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries, we seem to come directly to the modern life of a parochial community. And this is partly because an universal accompaniment of parish life which still endures was then instituted. However questionable some of the acts of Cromwell may have been, in September, 1538, directly after the monasteries had been suppressed, he issued an injunction, the utility of which has been so evident that the custom it established has existed until the present day. He ordered every parson, vicar and curate throughout the land to keep a book or register in which should be entered every wedding, christening, and burial which occurred in the parish. The Parish Register forms a strong link with the past; not only is it the family record of our forefathers, but it is continued until the events of our own families are entered therein. Although in many parishes, Clent among the number, the early years of the register are lost, when it does begin many of the names are those of families which still reside in the parish, or which only in modern times have vanished through removal or death. It deals with one and the same community which exists still, and the entries of to-day form part of the same record as those of three hundred years ago. If in earlier times we

appear to be writing of an ancient state of affairs, now we have at a bound entered upon the history of the parish as we at present know it.

That interest in Clent which he obtained on the dissolution of Halesowen Abbey the Duke of Northumberland held until his execution in the first year of the reign of Queen Mary. The ambitious nature of this nobleman caused him to form schemes for the aggrandisement of his family which led to his destruction. He had married his fourth son to Lady Jane Grey, whom he endeavoured to place on the throne on the death of King Edward VI. But the supporters of Mary were the stronger party, and his schemes failed; and in 1553, on Mary's coming to the throne, the Duke lost his head on the block, and his possessions were confiscated to the Crown. It is curious how closely the owners of the two manors in Clent—for Church Clent was to all intents and purposes a manor by this time—were connected with royalty at this period. The cousin of the lord of the ancient manor of Clent was King Henry's ill-fated queen, Anne Boleyn; and the Duke of Northumberland the lord of the new manor, an ambitious nobleman in close relationship with the court, and afterwards plotting to obtain the crown for his family.

An enquiry was held very soon after the Duke's property had been forfeited to the Crown, to report upon his possessions in Clent, and from the findings of the jurors or witnesses, Edward Moseley, John Underhill, Thomas Sparry of Walton, and John Loberich, we learn several particulars concerning it. The rents of the manor which had been paid to the vicar

"time out of the memory of man," the "rents of assize" of the Halesowen Abbey records, were as follows :—

		<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
John Underhill	payeth yearly	8	2
Thomas Hill		3	9
Thomas Sparry		1	6
Edward Loberich		1	4
William Sparry, gent.		2	0
Edward Moseley		0	7½
John Sparry		1	1
John Dunkley		0	6
John Pen		0	2

But even then the new manor took a subordinate place to the ancient manor of Clent, as is evident from the fact that if a man died who held land in both manors, the second best beast only fell as a heriot to the lord of Church Clent, while his best went to the lord of the old manor.

The vicarages of Clent and Rowley Regis were still both one, and the custom was that the chancels of both churches were repaired by the owner of the tithes, at this time the Queen, while the Church of Clent was greatly in decay. The tithe barn and tithe corn were held under lease from the late abbot (it was fifteen years since the abbey had been suppressed) by Henry Melley and Richard Cooke, who paid for them annually £5 6s. 8d., while the vicarage was held by Thomas Gaunt, and was worth £8 16s. 5½d. a year. There also belonged to the late Duke a small farm close to St. Kenelm's, called Sanens, and doubtless once the property of the family of this name before mentioned, consisting of three fields, two gardens, and

an orchard, and part of the churchyard of St. Kenelm's; this was held under lease by Richard Cook, who also was tenant of a meadow in Shropshire close by. The report finishes by saying that there was a common of about a hundred acres at Calcott Hill, of which the soil was coarse and ferny, but that it was estimated to keep 400 sheep.

Another source of information about the people at Clent opens out about this time: the wills of many of them are preserved henceforth in the Bishop's Registry at Worcester. The earliest Clent will is that of Thomas Nash, proved on February 7th, 1538, in which he styles himself of Clent in Cowbache. He was a person in comfortable circumstances, and leaves among other bequests 4*l.* to the monastery of St. Mary's at Worcester, and the same sum each to the high altar of Clent Church, and to the high light that burns before the rood there. In the next fifty years after this the wills of fourteen Clent people are preserved, most of them farmers or farmers' wives. Three of them are persons of the name of Sparry, and three of Nash, while the other names are Green, Cropper, Cox, Pyper, Donne, Hurcott, Loberich, and Payt, a contracted form of Patchett, now Pagett. These probably represented the wealthiest families in Clent at this time. Thomas Sparry, in 1553, leaves every poor person in the parish a hoop of rye. Philip Cox, in 1561, gave the church of Clent 5*s.* to pay for two clasps of silver he had received from it, and remits a sum of 2*s.* 4*d.* due to him for mending a testament. William Nash, in 1562, gave 8*l.* to the parish poor-box, and Elizabeth Cropper, four years later, bequeaths 5*s.* to the church.

Joan Nash, in 1572, left the church 3*s.* 4*d.* to buy a Bible, and Thomas Sparry, in 1580, 2*s.* 6*d.* to buy a book with. Of these persons the two wealthiest were William Green and William Nash, whose personal property respectively was valued at £106 13*s.* 3*d.*, and £26 6*s.* 9*d.*

Some of these wills afford us some idea of the price of live stock at this time. In 1579 the stock of William Green was valued as follows :—

	£	s.	d.
Six oxen	13	6	8
Three steers	5	0	0
Four kine and a young bull	6	0	0
Six score old sheep and 40 lambs	14	0	0
Six old swine and 4 pigs	1	0	0
A mare and colt and two nags	2	6	8

This man also kept bees, and five stalls of bees were valued at 6*s.* 8*d.* To Roger Hill belonged at his death, in 1586, the following stock :—

	£	s.	d.
A cow valued at	1	16	8
A mare	0	13	4
Two pigs	0	6	0
18 geese and divers poultry	0	10	0

Sir John Lyttelton, who purchased the manor of Clent from Sir John St. Leger in 1564, was the representative of an old Worcestershire family, which had been settled at Frankley, a parish some few miles to the north-east of Clent, for a considerable period. Many members of the family rose to eminence. Sir John himself had received the honour of knighthood

from Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth, on the occasion of her celebrated visit to the Earl of Leicester, the late Duke of Northumberland's son. He had previously been granted the office of Constable of Dudley Castle and Ranger of the parks there, by Queen Mary in 1553, when the Duke of Northumberland's property came into her hands. He died in 1590, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Gilbert Lyttelton.

A cause in Chancery against Gilbert Lyttelton was commenced in the autumn of the same year by his younger brother, George, to recover certain of the property of his father, including the rectory or parsonage of Clent, which had been granted to Sir John probably at the same time that the custody of Dudley Castle was given him. The pleadings disclose some curious family history. The grant from the Crown had still some years to run on Sir John Lyttelton's death. Sir John Lyttelton's second son, William, had been married to Margaret, the daughter of Richard Smith, of Shirford, but before husband and wife had lived together, William was killed by an accident, and the third son, George, the complainant, had married his brother's widow. How this bore on the point in dispute is not clear, for a great part of the pleading is torn away, but these facts are set out at great length, and all the settlements are recited in Gilbert Lyttelton's answer to the complaint. Sir John, on his death-bed, "feeling as it would seem somewhat moved in conscience," had expressed a wish that a third part of the said manors and property should go to his son George, and Gilbert, being present, acquiesced in this arrangement, but after his father's death refused to

carry it out, and so these proceedings were taken. How it was decided does not appear, but probably in the complainant's favour, for afterwards his son Stephen settled at Holbeach, part of the property in dispute, while Gilbert professes himself ready to do all that the law demanded of him, and laid no claim to the rectory of Clent.

The first legible entry in Clent register is the baptism of John, son of Richard and Elizabeth Bodlye, on Oct. 25th, 1562. The existing book is not the original one; at first registers were kept in paper books, and it was not till 1579 that the use of parchment was enjoined, and the entries of the old books ordered to be transcribed into parchment ones. This was done at Clent soon after the 13th of May, 1599, as the character of the entries changes suddenly at this date. Previously the baptisms had run thus:—"Faza, y^e daughter of Thomas Heath and Alice his wiffe was christened y^e last day of April 1599;" afterwards, in 1600, they were as follows:—"Margerie, the daughter of Edward Sparrie, was baptised the ix day of October." The scribe who transferred the entries had by this time handed over the new book to the vicar.

In the thirty-five years before 1600 there are 568 entries of all kinds in the register, or an average of rather more than 16 in each year. This points to a considerable population for this period, at all events much larger than the neighbouring parish of Hagley, where there are 196 entries in the same time, or an average of not quite 6. Of the entries in Clent register before this date, 67 are of the name of Sparrey, 37 Coxe, 30 Hill, 21 Cordiwyne, and 18 Waldron; and

other names that occur frequently are Nash, Bodiley, Underhill, Hurcott, Loberich, and Green. In after times the Hills and Waldrons multiplied exceedingly, and the other names gradually died out. There was a proverbial saying in the parish a hundred and fifty years ago, to the effect that "The people of Clent are all Hills, Waldrons, or devils;" but it is to be hoped that this is too sweeping a condemnation. There are one or two curious names, such as Hoggo, "a stranger;" Roesse and Leacher, two persons who were married in 1584; Kem and Tunckes. "Lews," a Welchman, was buried June 18th, 1575, and Mary Lews, widow, in April, 1590. The trade of butcher was carried on by some of the Cordiwynes, John Cordiwyne, "bocher," occurring several times, and before him Hugh Peter, alias "bocher," occurs. Sometimes the surname Peter is omitted, and this man is entered as Hugh Bocher only, shewing how surnames were gained from trades; for the children of the butcher would certainly be known as Bocher, a name now represented by Boucher. The only entries of the now common name Smith are some to which the alias Taylor is appended. This, perhaps, also indicates the man's trade, and curiously enough Smiths, alias Taylor, are found in later years in the registers at Pedmore.

The names of the churchwardens are first given in 1600, when they were Thomas Giles and Henry Waldron; and, with the exception of some twenty or thirty years, a complete list of them remains to the present time, uninterrupted since 1660. One entry is to the effect that a Litchgate was erected in 1580, October the 6th as the day, and that one Henry Hart was

the "chiffe doer;" but whether he found the money or the labour, or only superintended the work, cannot be gathered from these words. The register shews that some plague or pestilence visited the parish in 1597, for the entries of burials are very numerous, and at close intervals in the end of this year and the beginning of the next. It began, perhaps, in September, since from the 2nd of that month until the 26th of the January following there are twenty-two burials, sometimes two on the same day, and of husband and wife. One of these is that of Adam Javon, the vicar. But though sharp, the visitation was short, for after the last of the above dates there is not another burial till the last day of December; but numerous christenings are entered. In 1601 this entry occurs: "This year was the goodliest winter and kindest spring that ever came."

Thomas Gaunt, the last vicar mentioned, seems to have held the vicarage till 1556, on the 17th of March of which year Roger Chaunce was presented to the living by the Crown. He held it only one year, when Adam Javon became vicar on Jan. 12th, 1557. He was vicar for the long space of forty years, when his burial in the time of the plague is entered in the register on October 20th, 1597. His name appears frequently in the wills of Clent people as one of the witnesses, and apparently he was unmarried, or at least childless, as there is nothing relating to the family in the register except the burial in 1586 of "my brother, Thomas Javon."

Adam Javon was succeeded by Roger Ravenscroft, M.A., on Feb. 15th, 1598, but there is no trace of him

in the register, and he only held the living till Nov. 7th, when Charles Dudson followed him as vicar. He also has left no trace of his presence in the parish, and he must have been vicar only a short time, for Robert Cleye was vicar in 1600, though no record of his institution remains. His marriage to Elizabeth Sparrie is entered in 1601, and the baptism of two children in later years. On a stone at the east side of the chancel-door of the church, close to the latch, is an inscription in Latin, "Near this stone lies the body of John Cleye." This was an infant son of the vicar, baptised on Sept. 26th, 1604, and buried on the 5th of June, 1605, his place of burial being the chancel, on account of his relationship to the Sparreys, who had the right of interment there. Henry Sparrey, gent., the son of Roger Sparrey, who seems to have been a man of some importance in the neighbourhood, being described in a deed of this period as *valettus coronae*, and who held land at Hagley and in other parishes, was buried in Clent chancel on Dec. 21st, 1589, and on the 23rd February in the next year it is entered in the register that the vicar received a fee of 6s. 8d. for his burial. He married Rose Pype, sister of Sir Richard Pype, Lord Mayor of London in 1575, and his granddaughter Frances married William Amphlett of Hadsor, in the church of the parish of Salwarp, on Dec. 18th, 1614.

From some Chancery proceedings of the date of 1577 we learn that the custom in Clent for persons who wished to part with their land in the manor, was for them to surrender it to two trustees, for the use of the new owner, and that this surrender was presented at the next manor court, when the new owner was duly

admitted tenant. In the court rolls these persons are said to be "attorned" by the surrendering tenant. In accordance with this custom, John Cordywen, no doubt the "bocher" mentioned previously, surrendered, in 1575, to Henry Hart, also no doubt the "chiffe doer" in the setting up of the Litchgate, and Edward Hill, whom we shall hear of again, in trust for Philip Tolly, an Ombersley man, two cottages and some land in Clent, together with his interest in the Tansy meadow (the large meadow below the vicarage between the road and the brook), which was his father's for his life; but although Tolly procured the holding of a special court, at which the proper presentment and admission were to be made, the two trustees refused to deliver up the land. Much of the document is missing, including the answer of the defendants justifying their refusal; but it seems that there was some hitch about the purchase money, which was to have been paid in the church porch on the Feast of the Purification, February 2nd. When the parties assembled there, no proper receipt was forthcoming, and so the matter went to law.

In 1595 proceedings in the Court of Exchequer were taken by Edward Hill, described as a gentleman, of Calcott Hill, against Henry Moseley, John Sparrey, Robert Smith, Henry Wood, and William Franks, alias Chapman, tenants of the manor of Nether Clent. A new manor having arisen in the parish, it became necessary to distinguish from it the old feudal manor, which is therefore called Nether Clent^a. Edward

^a From early times it appears that Clent had been nominally divided into two *vills*, "Over" and "Nether" Clent. This distinction survived

Hill sets out that he was possessed of a house and a hundred acres of copyhold land in the manor of Church Clent, which manor belonged to the Queen. He says these persons had pretended to have common of pasture in Church Clent for their holdings in the old manor. They had entered a field called Halfnell, and their cattle had eaten grass and herbage to the value of £10, and if they are not stopped he says he shall not be able to pay the Queen her proper rent. And moreover these men had taken and sold distresses within the manor of Church Clent, intending to force Hill himself and the other tenants of the manor to attend at the Court Baron of Nether Clent. He goes on to assert that none of the tenants of Church Clent are within the jurisdiction of the court of the old manor, and prays for a day to be fixed on which the matter can be decided. These proceedings no doubt sprang out of a presentment by the jury at the Manor Court held Oct. 13th, 1593, when Edward Hill was ordered to throw open a lane, "*via regia*," leading from Stony Field to Walton Hill, called Halfnell-lane, which he had enclosed, under a penalty of £5. This he did not do, and he incurred the full penalty, which was by grace of the lord reduced to 20s.; but the next court again ordered him to remove the obstruction.

It is clear from this that the Court of Nether Clent, as it is henceforth called, did not abandon its claim of jurisdiction over the new manor in spite of its ap-

till the beginning of the present century, the parish officers being appointed for one or the other section, then called "Upper" and "Lower" Clent. Lower Clent is still the name applied to a group of houses on the main road.

parent independence. They considered the common of Calcott Hill common of the old manor, and therefore turned their stock upon it, and they executed the usual manorial processes within its bounds; and when we look at the circumstance under which Church Clent had come into existence, there is not much doubt they were right. Regarded from a historical point of view it is a pity this action went off on a side issue, as it did. Instead of setting forth the grounds of their claim, the defendants said that Edward Hill was outside the pale of the law, because he was outlawed at Stafford on the 8th of November, 1588, he not having appeared to answer an action of debt brought against him by one Thomas Rabone^b. They therefore, while not confessing that they had done anything wrong, declined to answer his complaint, and so the matter dropped. We shall find in future years more litigation concerning this manor, shewing that it was a long time before its rights and limitations got fully settled.

Destitution was widespread after the dissolution of the monasteries, and we have no reason to suppose that the people of Clent were better off than the rest of the country. With all their faults, the monasteries gave alms liberally, and doubtless a parish so intimately connected with Halesowen Abbey as Clent was under its especial care. It became necessary to deal with the pauperism of the country, and in the first year of King

^b The inconveniences attaching to a state of outlawry, which in former times involved the loss of all civil rights, must have been greatly diminished by this period. Edward Hill had formed one of the jury at the courts of the old manor every year since 1588. But it is clear that the disabilities were only latent.

Edward VI.'s reign violent remedies were attempted. An Act was passed reducing the landless and destitute poor to slavery, and causing them to be branded and to work in chains. This custom, however, lasted only for two years; when two collectors were appointed in every parish to call upon the householders and find out what weekly sum each would give to the poor. Those who refused to give were to undergo an ordeal of exhortation by the minister and churchwardens; and if still obdurate, they were to be denounced to the bishop. In 1558 the Act was renewed with fuller stringency, and in 1563 it was enacted that any who refused to give after being exhorted by the bishop should be summoned to Quarter Sessions, and were to be assessed by the justices there and thrown into prison until the amount was paid. Compulsion on the parish to support its own poor had now arisen.

So matters remained until 1601, when the Act was passed which formed the basis of all pauper administration until quite modern times. It was only a step from assessing unwilling payers to assess all property, and this was done by the Act. It established assessors or overseers in every parish who were to collect the rate, employ the able-bodied, and relieve the old and infirm. This Act, however, at first was only temporary; but it was renewed from time to time and made perpetual in the reign of King Charles I.

The naval enterprise which marked Queen Elizabeth's reign was perhaps comparatively unnoticed in so central a part of England as Kent. The parish could have furnished no sailors for the ships of Raleigh and Drake, and though doubtless some echoes of their romantic ex-

plotts reached the place from time to time, they were far-off stories to the country people. No doubt on the night of the 19th July, 1588, the beacon fires which announced the coming of the Armada were lighted on the high hills in this parish as well as other places, and the message which flamed from Malvern was passed on by Clent to Barr Beacon and other distant heights. But at the time the country people could not have known what special danger it betokened, and it would not be till a later time that the news of the destruction of Spain's vast fleet thrilled through Clent. One spot in the parish is still known by the name of the Beacon Hill, and though the name was long ago corrupted to Bicknall, yet in writings of a very few years back its full name is given. Curiously enough it is not nearly the highest land in the parish, and close to it is a higher eminence possibly once known as Signal Hill; and though these words would hardly be recognised in its present name of Still Hill, yet a gradual corruption through Sinnall to the name it now bears can be clearly traced. To the south and west a vast range of country is commanded from the flat top of Still Hill, but it is completely hidden from all other points by the higher eminence of Clent Hill, and it is upon this latter height that one would imagine warning fires in cases of public danger would be kindled. Due east of Clent Hill no higher land is found all across England and the flat plains of northern Germany and Russia until the Oural mountains are reached, more than 3,000 miles away.

In 1536 King Henry VIII. ordered the Bible to be set up in all churches, the first complete copy in English

having been printed in that year, and from this proceeding the transformation of the English people from Roman Catholic into Protestant eventually sprang. The Bible was nearly the only book which then existed that everybody who could read had access to, though such persons formed a small percentage of the population; and what they read therein was new and strange; for before it had come to them, if it had come at all, dressed in a Latin garb, and only through the agency of the Roman Catholic priest. No wonder that the Bible kindled a startling enthusiasm. The people had no other books to distract their attention from the wondrous stories it contained, and the whole temper of the nation was changed.

The intrigues of the Jesuits during the early part of Elizabeth's reign caused the government much disquietude, and eventually led to the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. A law was passed in 1583, expelling Jesuits and popish priests, while in the same year an Ecclesiastical Commission of unbounded power was established. The commissioners were ordered to enquire into all errors, heresies, and schisms, by any means that seemed good to them; and shortly all preaching or reading in private houses was forbidden. So arrogant were these proceedings that public opinion was quickly aroused against them, and the contest widened into the parliamentary struggle of the succeeding reigns.

Gilbert Lyttelton had died in 1590, and was succeeded by his son John, an ardent Papist, who had married Muriel, the daughter of Sir Thomas Bromley, Lord Chancellor of England, who leaned as strongly towards

Protestantism. John Lyttelton was implicated in the plot in which the Earl of Essex lost his head, was thrown into the Tower, and all his estates confiscated, so that once again Clent came to be a possession of the Crown. But it remained so only a very short time. John Lyttelton died in prison, and in 1604 Muriel, his widow, threw herself at the feet of King James at Doncaster, and obtained a reversal of the attainder, and the restoration of his estates to the family; and she lived 28 years after this, bringing up her children in the reformed religion. From this time uninterruptedly the manor of Clent has belonged to the Lytteltons.

CHAPTER X.

THE MANOR COURT IN ELIZABETH'S REIGN.

AFTER 1552 the series of court rolls for Clent does not recommence with any regularity till 1569, the eleventh year of Elizabeth, though three are to be found for three of her earlier years; and the last for her reign is for 1595. Though the general business of the courts was the same as before, still fresh facts are from time to time recorded. In 1583 for the first time, at the head of a roll, to the ancient name of the Manor is added "*alias* Chenett," the reason for which addition will be explained later, when I come to tell of the Charter of Clent. Clent, *alias* Chenett, is continued to the end of this reign, but after this time the second name is dropped. The court was probably held in the church; at all events, this was the case in later times, for in 1613 Walter Francke, *alias* Chapman, was fined 12*d.* for listening under the wall of the church, with the intention of hearing what the jury at the court then being held inside were saying. And an additional officer, not mentioned in former rolls, is every year appointed in the person of a *decennarius*, or as it is once translated, a "Thirdboroughe." The word *decennarius* has here fallen from its original meaning, which was that of the representative at the lord's court of a whole tything. But a thirdborough was only an under bailiff.

The people of Clent still assaulted each other with considerable frequency, one or two of them being especially pugnacious, even persons described as "gents" not being above making each other's noses bleed, while William Cox in 1576 set about Thomas Sparry's son, John, in the churchyard, and was duly fined 6*d.* Stray animals wandered about the parish, and were seized by the lord. In the 27 years these rolls cover, 36 sheep and 10 horses came under the jurisdiction of the court. In 1571 a stray sheep was claimed, and declared to be the property of the claimant; in 1577 one William Holmer claimed a sheep, was proved to have no title to it, and was fined 6*d.* for making a false claim. John Heath in 1585 was ordered to place a "wool mark" on the right side of the rump of each of his sheep, under a penalty of 10*s.* In 1577 all the inhabitants were ordered to mark their animals with a recognisable mark; but the next year Thomas Sparry was fined 3*s.* 4*d.* because he took from the bailiff's possession two sheep which were not marked on wool or body, and, therefore, ought to come to the lord as strays. In 1574 a stray sheep was taken possession of by Robert Kem, which he sheared; but before the court was held the sheep was lost again, and the value of the wool, 10*d.*, was all the lord would have.

A new class of orders is found in these rolls. An order was made at a court held October 14th, 1577, that no one should take or kill partridges or pheasants with an *enginium*, translated elsewhere "springe," under penalty of 20*s.*; while in 1592 it was ordered that no one who was not possessed of a free tenement worth 40*s.* a year should keep dogs for hunting conies, or

should hunt or hawk in the manor, or fish in the "separate" water of any tenant. Christopher Sparry in 1580 was fined 40s. because he entered the free warren of the lord and hunted there.

The same Christopher Sparry took part in a disturbance, recorded in the rolls of the neighbouring manor of Old Swinford. On April 11th, 1578, one Thomas Wheeler of Clent, armed with a sword and a club, went down to the market-place of Stourbridge, and with him were Christopher and Thomas Sparry of Clent, both yeomen. They enquired of one Roger Beare if any of the servants of John Gray (then the Squire of Enville, from whom descend the Earls of Stamford) were in the place, and, continues the roll, they used these words,—“yf any of them be in towne he wille be slapped on the lippes.” Afterwards they found the men they were looking for, and provoked them to fight, but the challenge was refused. Whereupon Christopher “openly and publicly” said,—“yf Mr. Graye were in place I could finde in my harte to draw on hym.” It does not appear what the cause of this quarrel was ; but whatever it might have been, it was afterwards made up again, for on October 7th, 1588, Mr. Gray and a party of neighbouring gentlemen, including Christopher Sparry, were presented at Hagley Court for entering the lord's free warren and hunting there with hawks.

In 1575 John Cordiwyne, the butcher of the parish, was fined 2*d.* for taking “excessive gain.” How feeling concerning this trade has changed since this time is evident from the Old Swinford roll for 1573, in which a penalty of 3*s.* 4*d.* is put on every butcher who

should not kill his calves and sheep in the open way before his door, or who should use his house, shop, or any secret place for this purpose. Such a custom could not be tolerated, much less enjoined, in the present day.

Several new orders were made about the commons and the hills. The rule as to "capulls," or horses, was modified. No person after 1574 was to keep on the common more than 4 horses for a yard land, 2 for a half yard land, or one for a cottage, under a penalty of 20s. In 1581 Thomas Sanford was fined for keeping one horse more than his number on the common, and later a penalty was placed on turning out horses that were infectious or diseased. In 1563 William Palmer and John Underhill made a great disturbance on Walton Hill, and persisted in cutting underwood, for which they were duly fined by the court. The penalty for cutting fern on the hills to burn was 3s. 4d.; probably the ashes were valuable as potash. Enclosures of the waste were frequent. Hugh Peter enclosed six perches to sow hemp upon in 1583, and the same year John Melley built a house upon the waste, and put one Bennett to live in it. They were both to appear at the next court, and show what right they had to do this, but nothing further appears about them. In the case of the common fields there seems to have been a tendency on the part of the tenants towards the enclosure of their portions either for an undue time or permanently. In 1592 an order was made that no one should alter the ancient course of agriculture in the Leet fields, or enclose any portion of the land which was not anciently enclosed, under penalty of £5;

and this is only one of the many orders made about such proceedings. In 1574 Henry Hart enclosed the Water Close at Nether Clent, and was fined 3*s.* 4*d.*, and year after year he is presented as keeping the land enclosed up to 1618, when an agreement was come to that Hart should pay 8*s.* annually to the churchwardens, for the use of the church, for the privilege of enclosing this and a field called Broad-close. In 1570 John Underhill enclosed a piece of land called Clouts, and persisted in doing so. This was in the Manor of Church Clent, and the presentment is an instance of the fact that the Court of Nether Clent was accustomed to exercise jurisdiction within that manor. But the Underhills had their own views of their rights, as will be seen further on.

Hemp was one of the crops grown in the parish at this time, and apparently to some extent; and flax also. Numerous orders forbidding persons to wash their hemp in this or that pond or stream occur from time to time. But no other crop is mentioned in the rolls, except of course corn in the corn-fields. Pigs were numerous; their owners had to ring them when four months old, and keep them so from time to time thereafter under penalty of 12*d.* for each pig unrung. Persons who neglected this rule are continually being fined, and the dwellers about Kempstowe Green were some of the worst of the offenders. From the rolls it is evident that there was a considerable population at this place, which has now, with the houses they dwelt in, quite disappeared. There are now very few houses in the neighbourhood of St. Kenelm's Church; and it is difficult to see, since Halesowen comes quite

to the summit of the neck of land between Clent and Walton Hills, where houses could have been to be situated in Clent parish. But they were there, nevertheless.

It is often supposed that to glean is a right inherent in the poor inhabitants of a village. But this was not so in Clent. Gleaning in the corn-fields without permission was forbidden in 1576, under a penalty of 3s. 4d.; nor, it appears from a roll for 1582, even with permission was it allowed until all the corn was carried. A like penalty was imposed in this latter case.

In 1583 the jury present that William Sparry of Walton, a copyholder of the manor, had died since the last court, and his heir was his only daughter under one year of age. I mention this presentment as it is an instance of the old custom of Deodand. William Sparry had met with his death in cutting down a certain oak, one of the branches of which fell upon him, and he "instantly died." The entry goes on—"and the aforesaid branch is deodand, and of the value of 2d., and is forfeited to the lord by virtue of letters patent in that part conceded."

The tenants did not always quietly obey the officers of the court, and sometimes spoke their minds about them and the jurors. John Cordiwyne and Henry Sparry in 1578 openly spoke scandalously of the jurors, saying that they were "false and perjured;" and in 1587, when the constable interfered between Henry Moseley and one Blocksich he was attacking, Moseley "in his malice" used "unworthy and scandalous words" against the constable in the execution of his duty; and the end of it was that he was fined

3s. 4d. for the assault, and the like sum for insulting the constable. There is a curious entry in the roll of Halesowen for 1583. One Roger Payne was fined for making "rimes" and other *ridiculamenta* against the good fame of his neighbours at Warley Wigorn. No common scolds are mentioned in this series of rolls, but in the neighbouring manor of Old Swinford, since the population there was much larger, such entries are common. Benedicta Waldron, whose acts seem to have belied her name, is returned in 1612 as a common *rixatrix* and *disturbatrix* of the King's peace, and she was ordered to be placed upon the "gome-stool." Drunkards and night-walkers are ordered to be put in the stocks by the jury. There is no mention of such an instrument of punishment at Clent, but in 1596 the neighbouring vill of Romsley presents itself in English as "falty, for that their stocks be out of reparacion, and that they shall make them sufficient before Whitsunday next in peyne of 20s." In the Old Swinford roll for 1574 is a long history of a struggle between the bailiff, Roger Sparry (whose name shows that he was probably a Clent man who had migrated there), and one young Humphrey Wheeler, who assaulted the officer, broke the stocks when he was put in them, and then threatened the bailiff with a knife; finally escaping to the shop of his master, one William Toye, for which misconduct he was fined 5s.

In the Clent rolls nothing also is said about the practice of archery, though there are several entries concerning it in rolls for Halesowen. In 1573 it is therein ordered, that "every one above the age of 12 yeres, and is able to sutte, shall follow their bowes, and

applye themselves to artyllerie, and that they do not play at the balle nor no unlesfull games, in penalty of every one of them makynge defalte 3s. 4d." This is given in English. In the Clent rolls for 1575 Richard Heath and Robert Kem, who both kept beershops, were fined because they permitted card-playing in their houses, and they were not to allow it for the future under a penalty of 3s. 4d. A further order was made, that no one should play at cards or other unlawful games under penalty of 3s. 4d., unless they had attained the age of 60 years. One of the most popular games, often mentioned, was bowls, but this, with card-play, was the privilege only of the aged. These enactments were intended to keep alive the use of the bow, which was dying out.

Rogues, sturdy knaves and beggars are frequently mentioned. In 1576 the bailiff was fined for not arresting all such that be found in the manor, while orders were made in different years that no ale should be sold to such persons. In 1595 all tenants were forbidden to allow suspected persons, strong mendicants of either sex, or persons who pretended to be *debiles milites*, broken-down soldiers, to stay the night in any of their buildings. If they did, the hospitality they showed was to cost the giver of it 10s. In 1588 an Act of Parliament was passed forbidding anyone to set up a cottage without providing 4 acres of land to be held with it; and also forbidding the owner or occupier of a cottage to allow more than one family to dwell in it, under penalty of forfeiting 10s. to the lord of the manor for every month the tenement was so inhabited. Numerous entries spring from this en-

actment. In 1592 Edward Male and John Cordiwen were duly fined 10s. each for keeping subtenants, or "inmakes," in their houses ; and for the future such entries are common. In 1595 the jury presented that Letitia Cropper, a widow, had built a cottage and had not laid to the same 4 acres of land, whereby she had forfeited a penalty of £10 according to the Act. In later times an entry seems to have been made in each roll as a matter of form, setting out that the inhabitants of the manor had broken divers penal statutes, and fining them for the same 12*d.* A statute habitually broken was one directing people to wear caps made in England, when they attended their parish church on Sundays and Saints' days. At first individual offenders are named, but this offence was afterwards entered in a common form, and all the inhabitants are returned as offending, and saddled with a nominal penalty. This probably came to be one of the "divers statutes" mentioned above. Laws against excess in clothing were somewhat numerous at this period.

Breakers of the assize of ale continue to be reported by the aletasters. If brewers sold ale to a mendicant they were fined 12*d.* In 1575 Richard Heath and Robert Kem, who have been mentioned before, and were perhaps the worst offenders, were ordered for the future to sell ale at the rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ *d.* a quart, and to sell it also in a lawful and sufficient cup called "the pewter," containing full measure. In default, they were to be fined 3*s.* 4*d.* each. But they did not obey the order, and were fined at the next court ; at which, however, the penalty was remitted so long as *brassum* (malt?) was commonly sold at 20*d.* the strike. In 1586 it was

again ordered, under penalty of 20s., that no brewer or baker should sell ale or bread to sturdy rogues or beggars. In later years it seems that all measures by which ale was sold were to be duly *sigillati*, or marked, and it was an offence to use others. In 1612 there is an entry which strongly foreshadows the present licensing laws, in a presentment made by the ale-tasters that Roger Waldron sold ale without being licensed by the justices of the peace ; and, moreover, as his house was not situated in a convenient spot for the purpose, he was not to brew ale for selling under a penalty of 10s. for each week he continued to offend. In Halesowen orders were continually being made regulating the beer traffic.

Such are a few of the matters dealt with in the court rolls. But the bulk of them is made up of routine and other entries, of little interest in the present day, as may be gathered when I say that in some of them there are as many as 60 or 70 inhabitants of the manor mentioned by name.

CHAPTER XI.

CLENT IN PURITAN TIMES.

ROBERT Cleye was, perhaps, the first married vicar who held the incumbency of Clent. During Queen Elizabeth's reign the members of the old faith had regarded "priests' wives" with the greatest abhorrence; the appellation was to them a term of the deepest degradation. Robert Cleye's wife was a daughter of William Sparry of Walton, by his wife Joyce Coxe, who married secondly Henry Wood, and became the mother of two sons and three daughters, baptized at Clent. Of these, one son, John, was christened on the 10th Nov., 1596; he it was, in all probability, who became Vicar of Clent in 1626.

The character of the entries in the register changes suddenly in June, 1609, which was probably the year of Cleye's death. Thomas Broade, the next vicar recorded in the bishop's registers at Worcester, was presented by King James I. on May 7th, 1610. The entries in the register made by him are very curt, containing neither the father's nor mother's name of the children baptized.

Much has yet to be learned of the history of the advowson of Clent at this period; but from some depositions in the Exchequer of the year 1610 it would appear that the Rectory of Clent and Rowley, if not the advowson, had passed from the possession of the

king into that of Francis Phillips and Richard Moore. These persons in that year instituted proceedings against William Steward, to recover certain lands and property in Rowley which they asserted belonged to the Rectory of Clent, while Steward maintained that it belonged to Lord Dudley, and he was Lord Dudley's tenant. The property consisted of a house, which the plaintiff called the Parsonage House, then in the occupation of the defendant, and of land called the Parsonage Meadow, the Calves Croft, Clates Meadow, Birchin Field, and White Heath, together with a moor called the Church Moor, a field called Tocknill, and two cottages. Several witnesses were examined on both sides, those for the plaintiff declaring that the property belonged to the Rectory of Clent and Rowley, while those for the defendant said it belonged to Lord Dudley, and denied even that the Parsonage House had ever been called by that name, but always after its occupant. One old man, named John Coles, said he had known the house over 60 years, and he had never heard it called the Parsonage House. What was done in this suit has not yet been discovered. From the evidence of one of the witnesses, it appears that the tithe corn and tithe barn of Clent were then held by "Mr. Greville, Esq.;" and this witness also says that one freehold and nine copyhold tenements in Church Clent were holden of the Rectory of Clent, and their owners paid their chief rents to the vicar, and all their other services to the king. William Underhill, the owner of Calcott Hill, in the manor of Church Clent, gave evidence on the plaintiff's behalf.

Three years later the Attorney-General, then Sir

Henry Hoobert, Knt., laid an information in the Exchequer against this William Underhill, from which we learn many facts concerning Clent at this time. In the manor of Church Clent was a common on which grew oak, ash, beech, birch, hazel, and holly-trees, and from these woods the tenants of the manor might take each year, for mending their fences, one wain-load or one wagon-load, according to the size of their holdings. But William Underhill it is said, not content with his proper share, drew in eight years no less than 100 wain-loads, and not only used the wood to mend his fences, but burnt it in his house, and made wagon and cart-wheels of it. Besides this, Underhill had "encroached and set up divers buildings upon the waste, and had straightened the ways and passages there;" and had enclosed and ploughed up many parts of the said waste, and had carried away the turf and soil.

Another charge against Underhill was, that he had tried to dispossess one William Taylor of his holding in the manor, pretending that Taylor had entered by force on the property of Humphrey or Maurice Walsingham; and that suborned by one of these, he had made an application at Quarter Sessions at Stafford to this end, in which he alleged that Taylor had dispossessed Thomas Lyttelton, Esq., of his freehold in these lands. Whereas, says the Attorney-General, Lyttelton only farmed this manor under the Crown, whose property it really was. We seem here to have Underhill attempting to set up an ownership of the manor for the Lytteltons, the undoubted lords of the old manor, an ownership which had been stoutly disputed shortly before by Edward Hill, when he possessed Calcott Hill.

Yet another matter is alleged against Underhill in this voluminous information. One Peter Phillips and Edmund Sawyer had commenced an action in the Common Pleas against Thomas Broade, late the Incumbent of Clent and Rowley, questioning his right of presentation. Broade had been presented in "His Majesty's right as undoubted patron" by Lord Chancellor Ellesmere. In this action Underhill seems to have interfered, intending by "simony and champertie to get the advowson for his son, William Underhill, clerk;" and not only is he accused of tampering with the witnesses when the cause was tried at Stafford, but of entering into a bond with one Richard Hamnet of Dudley, who pretended to a title to the advowson derived from Phillips and Sawyer, to pay him £100 if the advowson could be recovered from Broade.

William Underhill, in his answer to this information, dismisses all the charges concerning the advowson as "matters not determinable in this court," and takes no notice of the accusation that he had endeavoured to dispossess William Taylor. Apparently he thinks the charge connected with the common in the manor the most serious thing he has to meet, for he asserts that he took no more wood than his proper quantity, and indeed had taken none since 1608, when he planted his hedges with quickset. Not only had he not barred and straightened any of the ways on the common, but had much improved them, and indeed widened many that ran between his lands. He confessed to having ploughed up some of the common, but that was only in accordance with custom, which was whenever "any manner of herb or grass being apt to rot sheep did

grow upon the said waste," to cut and plough it up and carry it away. This he had done in certain places, "breeding penny grass, spire grass, and the like," after the death of many of his sheep. Shortly after this Underhill entered another pleading in this case, to the effect that he had been informed that the king was "not now owner of the said waste," and so the matter dropped.

However this may have been, it appears from further litigation concerning Church Clent manor, which will be alluded to in its proper place, that the manor did not finally pass out of the king's hands till May 16th, 1633, and at that time the Rectory and advowson were apparently still in the possession of the Crown, as they were especially excepted in the grant by which Church Clent passed to its new proprietors. Perhaps the Francis Phillips and Richard Moore of the first action, and the Peter Phillips and Edmund Sawyer of the second, were merely lessees of the Crown property, and their real status may be made manifest at some future time by discoveries in the public records. Yet Underhill says clearly that the king was not owner of the manor, and the suit dropped accordingly. We must wait for further light on this point.

Thomas Broade was vicar only for two years, for in 1612, William Sherborn, or Shelburn, was presented to the living by the king, in whose favour the action mentioned above must have been decided, and was instituted on May 18th of that year. His name is not to be found in the register, which appears to have been very badly kept during his time, nor does he ever perform the friendly office of witnessing a parishioner's will. He

was succeeded, on February 10th, 1626, by John Wood, B.A. John Wood was a bachelor when he became vicar, for he married at Belbroughton the same year the widow of William Perrott, of Bell Hall, and daughter of Francis and niece of Sir John Conyers, Constable of the Tower of London. He combined farming with his ministry, and possessed a large flock of sheep, which ran upon the commons in the parish. Several of his children were baptized at Clent, and the last time his name appears signing the register as vicar is in 1641, though a transcript at Worcester was signed by him in 1644. The register from this time till 1649, when it was recommenced by Andrew Tristram, his successor is wanting; nor are there any transcripts in existence to supply the deficiency. Parish registers were greatly neglected in the troublous times of Charles I.'s reign, and though in the year 1644 an ordinance was passed by the House of Commons, that a "fair register book of velim" was to be procured and kept by the "ministers and other officers" of every church throughout the land, the neglect was universal.

From wills preserved at Worcester some interesting facts concerning the people of Clent at this time may be gathered. John Underhill, of Calcott Hill, in 1604, left 10s. to the church to be bestowed on some ornament; and in 1613 Edward Waldron, of Walton, left 5s. to the poor of Clent, and a penny dole at his funeral. Edward Waldron's trade was one that formed the occupation of many people both in Clent and the neighbouring parish of Belbroughton, and which remained in the Waldron family until quite recent times. His trade was that of scythesmith, and though the last Waldron

parted with his business some years ago, the scythes made by his successor in the parish of Belbroughton are still stamped with the name of Waldron, and are known all over the world as "Waldron's scythes." Scythe-smiths' shops formerly existed in many places in Clent, and though they have now disappeared, and the houses adjoining them have been pulled down, the dark ground sometimes turned up by the plough shews where they once were situated.

Thomas Green, who died in 1620, was the tenant of a Mr. Lowe, and the following are the values of some of his farming stock :—

	£	s.	d.
4 oxen	11	0	0
4 kine and 1 bullock	12	0	0
1 horse, 1 mare, and 1 nag	4	10	0
2 swine	0	10	0
6 sheep	1	3	0
3 stalls of bees	0	8	0

The will of Thomas Hill, yeoman, in 1622, discloses that his farm was called Austen Jenks, a name which has now disappeared, and that he held the land on lease for 7 years from Francis Hill, which lease was valued at £25 when he died. He farmed in a large way, for his stock was valued at £144 10s. His body he directed to be buried under the belfry in Clent Church. Richard Hill, who died in 1623, was a tailor, and he lived in a house he rented, though his landlord's name is not given. Edward Hart died in the same year, and carried on the trade of maltster, for he left the use of his "mault" mill and "fornace" to his wife Alice, for her

life; and he bequeathed also to the 12 poorest householders of Clent 12*d.* each. Edward Pyttman died in 1626, and was a small farmer; he left everything to his wife, "for it is all too little for her." Among his stock were, "One goose and a gander, two hens and a cock," valued at 3*s.*, and five fleeces of wool worth 3*s.* 4*d.* Dorothy Cox, a spinster lady, one of a family of that name who lived at the Gate House in Clent, probably on the site of old Clent Grove, though its precise locality is quite lost, died well endowed with this world's goods in 1632, and left her body to be buried in Clent Church, near to her deceased parents and sister. Thomas Waldron, a son of the Edward previously mentioned, died in 1635, also a scythesmith. Owen Charles was possessed, in 1635, of a house and close and 4 acres of land, which he held on a 99 years' lease from Francis Hill, which was valued at £20 at his death.

In 1635 died Roger Perkes. He had been servant to John Sparry, who left a legacy to Roger Perkes, his man, in 1598. Roger Perkes was not ungrateful, for he remembered his master's family in his will, and bequeathed to Mrs. Frances Amphlett of "Hadsworth" (Hadzor), in the county of Worcester, his best coffer. Her mother was John Sparry's daughter. John Green died in 1636, and was a wheelwright. In 1637 we find the first mention of another trade, universal at one time in Clent, as well as all the surrounding district, where it exists, though it cannot be said to flourish, at the present day. Abraham Hill was a nailor, and he seems to have been in comfortable circumstances. William Sparry made a will in 1619, which

was not proved till so long after as 1636. He lived at Broad Hedley Hall in the parish of Northfield, and was closely connected with the Clent Sparrys, as he not only leaves his body to be buried in the church or chancel of Clent, but also left to the poor people of that parish £5, to be "yearly set forth" by the churchwardens and overseers "to the use of the poor" on the feast of the Nativity of our Lord. Richard Nash, in 1637, left 50s. to the poor of Clent, the interest of which was to be distributed each year on the feast of Pentecost; and in 1641, John Waldron gave another 50s. to be added to the parish stock for the relief of the poor. He also left the church 10s. towards buying a "cloth for the pulpit."

By this time another family had taken up the trade of scythe-making, for the will of John Cox, scythesmith, was proved in 1642; and the next year that of his son, Philip Cox, also a scythesmith. Philip Cox seems to have added farming to his trade of scythe-maker, for in the inventory of his property the following stock and its value is given:—

	£	s.	d.
5 kine, 4 oxen, and 3 young beasts,			
1 nag, and 1 mare	23	0	0
5 score and 3 sheep	20	0	0
7 swine	4	10	0
8 hens and 1 cock, 12 geese and 1 gander	0	15	0

The total value of his property was £197 1s. This is the last will of an inhabitant of Clent to be found at Worcester till 1664. There was just as great, or even a greater gap in these matters during the time of the civil war as there was in the keeping of Church registers.

One more will of this period, which I have not yet mentioned, requires more extended notice. In 1616, Humphrey Penn of Pen Orchard died, and in his will he cut off his eldest son, Roger, and his daughter, Elizabeth Wheeler, with 12*d.* each, giving his son Thomas the rest of his goods. In the previous year he surrendered the following lands to trustees for the use of the parishioners of Clent, namely Bigger and Lesser Stoolstile, Sinnell's Pleck near the Bicknall, the Grove, a broomy piece of land with a meadow pleck at the bottom of it, Lower Winden, Upper Clent meadow, Wheatacre, Broadwaters, and Oathill. These lands are now known as the Church Lands, and the money arising from them, or from the proceeds of the sale of, or from land received in exchange for, part of them, is applied to the maintenance of the fabric and services of Clent Church. The names of the first trustees, to whom the lands were surrendered on the 22nd of April, 1616, were Humphrey Penn himself, William Sparry, Gent., John Sparry, Gent., William Underhill, Thomas Cox, John Sparry of Wassell, and Thomas Heath; and on the 4th September, in this same year, Humphrey Penn having died meanwhile, these persons were admitted tenants of the property, with the exception that Roger Penn, Gent., took his father's place, while John Cox was admitted instead of his father, Thomas Cox, and an addition was made to the original number in the person of Thomas Sparry. No other trustees were appointed till 1750, and the charity seems to have been administered all this time by the Cox family.

From a copy of Court Roll of Clent, dated Sept. 8th, 1628, recording the conveyance of land from Symon

Gower to Owen Charles, neither of these people belonging to Clent families, and indeed from the court rolls generally, it can be gathered that the system of common fields was still in full force at that time. The lands conveyed consisted of a tenement and close of land lying in Ash furlong, one acre of land called the Great Acre in Wynden field, another strip of land in the same field, and an acre of land in Walton Ashfield, going up to Tinfeld. Richard Taylor was steward of the manor, and Humphrey Peplow the lord's bailiff, but he was not a Clent man, as the name never occurs elsewhere in connection with the parish. The list of jurors discloses another trade carried on in Clent at this time, for John Cox is described in the record as "loker" or locksmith, and the same appellation is attached to his name when it occurs in the parish register.

Agriculture began to make considerable advances during the years we are now considering. Perhaps the first new plant introduced into the ordinary round of English field operations was the hop. Here and there this plant had been cultivated during the preceding century, but the practice extended largely in succeeding years. One of the fields in Clent still bears the name of the "Hopyard," and the presence of wild hops in the hedgerows in many places shews where they have formerly been cultivated. At the present time hops are largely grown in Worcestershire, but their cultivation does not extend into the northern part of the county, where Clent is situated.

Besides hops, other plants were gradually introduced. Clover was brought into the country soon after 1645, and turnips began to be cultivated about the same time.

These plants were introduced from Holland, where agriculture had always been in a more forward state than in England. But while we think of these additions to the stock of English cultivated plants, we must not forget that at this time others were cultivated which are seldom seen now. Flax and hemp, it appears from the court rolls, were grown in the parish, which, though they were no addition, like roots and clover, to the feeding qualities of the crops either for man or beast, were of great value for clothing purposes.

The wages of labour continually rose during the first half of the seventeenth century. Under an Act of Parliament passed in 1564, the magistrates at Quarter Sessions fixed the wages of labour for their respective counties. In Rutlandshire, in that year, an artizan was to be paid 9*d.* a day in summer, and 8*d.* in winter; while a labourer was to receive 7*d.* and 6*d.* at the same seasons; and these rates probably were the same for the whole of the country. A gradual rise, however, went on, till in 1651 the artizan's wages were fixed at 1*s.* 6*d.* to 1*s.* 4*d.*, and a labourer's at 1*s.* 2*d.* to 1*s.* Mowing was paid for at the latter date at the rate of 1*s.* 8*d.* an acre, and making hay at 2*s.* Reaping wheat and rye cost 3*s.* 4*d.* an acre, and barley or oats 2*s.* 3*d.* Women appear to have been so often employed in the harvest field that it was necessary to fix a rate for them also, and their labour was to be paid for at 1*s.* 2*d.* a day. It was not till 1812 that the power of the magistrates to fix a rate of wages, which was enforced by a system of fines and penalties, was finally done away with ^a.

^a Rogers's *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, New ed., chap. xvi. p. 387.

The early years of King James's reign were marked by the conspiracy known as Gunpowder Plot, in which many Worcestershire men were implicated, including some of the members of the Lyttelton family. Some of the conspirators were run to earth at Holbeach, in Kingswinford parish; others came to Hagley, where they were betrayed by a servant at the Hall, and taken in a barn near Hollier's farm. It does not appear that in Clent there were any catholic families, and no doubt the feelings of the people were entirely against the conspirators, whose proceedings would be so closely brought home to them by the excitement of their chase and capture. Clent does not seem to have had any direct connection with the history of the country during the rest of the reign of King James, who died in 1625, and was succeeded by his son Charles.

Soon after the accession of Charles war broke out with France. Soldiers were impressed for the army all over England, nor did Clent escape. In 1627, one Francis Inkyn of Clent, a tailor, who, however, was not a native of the parish, was impressed and taken to Plymouth with 100 other Staffordshire men, most of them probably as unwilling to fight for their king as he was. At all events, before they reached their destination, no less than 26 deserted, Francis Inkyn among the number. But Clent people took little part in the disturbances and troubles of King Charles's reign. Still they had to pay their share in the levies raised for the support of the Puritan army. A sum of £5 11s. 5d. was assessed on the united parishes of Broom and Clent, and forthwith a dispute arose as to the shares in which the sum should be provided by the two places. The

dispute was carried to the general sessions at Stafford, when the matter was decided by Clent consenting to pay three parts and Broom one, and this was directed to be the arrangement in all future payments ordered by the Court. A Puritan Committee sat at Stafford during the Civil War, and issued various orders about the affairs of the Commonwealth. On Aug. 10th, 1644, it was ordered that the weekly pay of several parishes in the south of Staffordshire, including Clent and Broom, should go towards the expenses of the troops under the command of Captain Tovey and Lieutenant-Colonel Roper, while they were in the service of the county. This weekly pay was collected by officers of horse, and a Mr. Thomas Wood acted as treasurer.

In the beginning of 1645 there was a considerable number of Parliamentary troops in the neighbourhood of Clent, under Sir William Brereton, the main body being quartered at Sutton Coldfield. Hastings was the name of the Parliamentary leader in the neighbourhood of Clent, and the King's men were commanded by Colonel Stone. "But the enemy avoid fighting as much as they can," says *Mercurius Veredicus*, a Puritan newspaper, "and bestow their industry on robbing passengers, and in their old trade among carriers." One section of Sir William Brereton's troops "was straightening of Dudley Castle; others quarter on the further part of Staffordshire, about Bellend, Clent, and Sturbridge. They have parties of horse continually moving between Dudley and Halesowen, to keep the enemy from filching contributions that way, which is very rich and prosperous."

On January 30th, 1649, King Charles was brought

to the scaffold. One of the vicars of Clent in after years, Thomas Walker, an ardent Royalist, inscribed the following verse on a blank page in the parish register :—

“Greate, just, & good, could I but sate
My tears wth thy too rigid fate,
I’d weep y^e world to such a straine,
Y^e it should deluge once again.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHARTER OF CLENT.

IN the time of William the Conqueror and Edward the Confessor, as we have seen, the manor of Clent belonged to the King, and as such was known as a manor of "ancient demesne," which simply meant that in these ancient times it was king's property. The inhabitants and tenants of manors of ancient demesne possessed of common right certain privileges, which sprang from the fact that they were, so to speak, King's men, and that they were always supposed, when their affairs took them outside their parish, to be engaged on the king's business, and therefore exempt from some of the duties and burdens which fell upon the people of the country generally. In after times these privileges became very valuable rights, and were not always allowed without dispute. It became necessary then that the inhabitants of Clent should have some public authorisation which they might point to in cases of dispute, and to gain this they sought from the crown a charter setting forth their rights. Kingswinford, mindful of its old connection with Clent, joined them in their petition, which was made in the time of King Henry VIII.

The only evidence that a manor was of ancient demesne was its appearance in Domesday Book as king's property, and this we know was the case with Clent. But in that record it occurs as a Worcestershire manor, and when the inhabitants applied for a charter

manifesting their rights, they did so as the inhabitants of Clent in Staffordshire. This gave rise to a curious mistake.

The authorities of course could not find any mention of Clent as a Staffordshire manor, and as they did not know their Domesday Book sufficiently well to be aware of the facts, nor the history of the parish well enough to help them, they set to work to find a manor in Staffordshire with a name as near like that of Clent as possible, which fulfilled the necessary conditions, and they found it in Chenet, under which name Cannock appears in that record, and which was also a king's manor. So they jumped to the conclusion that Clent and Chenet were the same place, and in the charter which was afterwards granted the manor is styled throughout "Chenett, alias Clent," to the former of which names it never had the ghost of a title.

Although the charter was petitioned for in the reign of King Henry VIII., it was not until the ninth year of Queen Elizabeth's reign that it was obtained for the manors of Kingswinford and Clent jointly, and even after that it was found necessary to have it exemplified and confirmed in the reign of King Charles I., when they obtained a document as follows:—

"Charles, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the faith, &c., to all whom these present letters shall come, greeting. We have seen the Inrollment of certain letters patent of our dear Sister, Queen Elizabeth of England, bearing date at Westminster in the ninth year of her reign. To the men and tenants of the manors of Swinford and Clent, in the county of Stafford, made and granted in rolls of our chancery, Inrolled and there upon

record remaining in these words. The Queen to all and singular Justices, Sheriffs, Mayors, Bailiffs, Constables, Ministers, and to all others her faithful subjects, as well in their liberties as without, unto whom greeting. Whereas according to the custom of our Kingdom of England hitherto used and approved, the men and tenants of ancient demesne of our Crown of England of Toll money, Stall money, Highway money, Bridge money, Pitching money, Packing money, Walling money, Entering and Passing money, through the whole Kingdom ought to be acquitted, and according to the custom aforesaid the men and tenants of ancient demesne of our aforesaid Crown ever hereto time whereof the memory of man is not to the contrary have been accustomed to be acquitted from contributing to the expences of Knights of our Parliament and of our Progenitors in time past, Kings of this Kingdom of England, chosen and coming from their countries; and also according to the custom aforesaid the men and tenants of the manors which are of ancient demesne are not to be served at the Assizes or put upon their recognitions, unless it be in their own manors for the lands they hold of the same demesne. And the manors of Swinford and Chenett, otherwise called Clent, within the county of Stafford, are ancient demesne of our Crown of England, as by a certain certificate unto our Lord Henry the Eighth King of England, our most dear father, by his appointment sent into his Chancery, and amongst the files of our Chancery remaining upon record, to us it doth appear. You and every one of you we do enjoin and command that ye suffer all and singular the men and tenants of the aforesaid manors of Swinford and Chenett, alias Clent, to be quit as touching payment of Toll money, Stall money, Highway money, Bridge money, Pitching money, Packing money, Standing money, and Passing money, and from expences of Knights of the Parliament, and that they put not the men and tenants of the same manors, or either of them,

to be sworn in assizes or put upon recognitions, but only such as ought to be in the Countries of the same manors, and if ye have done any distresses to them or either of them by these occasions see that ye release them. In witness whereof, &c., T. R. at Westminster, this thirteenth day of June, in the ninth year of our reign. We admit of the truth of the said Inrollment of the said Letters Patent at the request of William Bendy and other tenants of the said manors of Swinford and Chenett, alias Clent, and have caused them to be exemplified by these presents. In witness thereof these our letters have been made patent. Witness our seal at Westminster, the third day of November in the first year of our reign."

A copy of the charter as above is in the possession of one of the inhabitants of Clent, written on a piece of parchment in size about 14 inches by 8 inches, and it also exists in a printed form differing in some slight respects from the copy given above, but the same in substance.

The privilege of holding a fair was one eagerly sought after by lords of manors in early times, and was frequently granted by the king to his subjects, thereby conveying to them the power of exacting a toll in witness of the bargains made at the fair; and this power, when once granted, could not be taken away by any subsequent grant to other persons. But the charter of Clent was a confirmation of rights which had existed from the time of the Conquest, and which were therefore prior to grants in after times. It came to be held that the right of tenants of ancient demesne to exemption from tolls at fairs was limited to things concerning husbandry or sustenance; and, so far as these were con-

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cerned, the men of Clent and Kingswinford were undoubtedly free. But an Act of Parliament caused matters to stand on a different footing. It was always supposed that Parliament knew everything, and when it passed an Act incompatible with any of these privileges, that it did so on purpose; and therefore the people of Clent could not escape any market tolls established by Act of Parliament.

Some of the other privileges perhaps require some explanation. The principle that the inhabitants of these manors were king's men occupied in the king's business runs all through the charter. Stall money was the fee paid for erecting stalls at fairs and markets. All land was held of the king either directly or indirectly, and as such was supposed to be held subject to the rights of the king's tenants, who represented the supreme lord. Highway money was originally a toll exacted from wayfaring men for passing through one of the king's forests. It had nothing to do with turnpike roads, and though Clent men claimed freedom from turnpike tolls, they clearly had no right to do so, as these payments were imposed by Act of Parliament, and therefore came under the exception mentioned above. Such tolls were really payments in aid of the rates of any parish, for on the parish devolved the ultimate duty of mending the roads, and the tenants of the manor might with just as much justice have claimed exemption under the charter from paying highway rates as from the tolls taken at toll-bars. Bridge money was either a contribution towards maintaining some bridge, or a toll taken for passing over it; and in this case, if the bridge had been originally built by the permission

of the king, the tenants would go free, but if there was any Act of Parliament regulating the matter, as was usually the case, then the exemption would be destroyed. Pitching money and Packing money were payments for breaking up the ground to erect stands or booths at fairs, and were of quite the same nature as Stall money; while Walling money was a toll exacted in some boroughs for the maintenance of their walls, and could only be collected by reason of a grant from the king, and in this case the tenants would be exempt. But this was a payment which fell early into disuse. Passing money and Entering money were personal tolls or fees paid for the king's license to enter or leave the kingdom. The tolls for passing fords or ferries were also sometimes called Passing money; and fords and ferries were often sources of revenue to the lords of the manors in which they were situated; but in this case, as well as the former one, the tenants of ancient demesne would be exempt on the principle that they were on the king's business.

The privilege, however, which was most valuable to Clent people was the exemption from having to serve on juries. This was an undoubted privilege of tenants of ancient demesne, and was allowed until comparatively recent times. In this case it was held in law that the Acts of Parliament affecting juries were affirmative only, and did not take away the prior exemption. But an Act of the present reign has altered this state of affairs, and by it tenants of ancient demesne have been expressly made liable to serve as jurors.

The piece of parchment mentioned above is much worn and battered, from having been carried about as

a visible and tangible evidence of the bearer's right. In quite recent times, one Clent man always took his stock to market with a copy of the charter in his pocket, and claimed all his rights supposed and otherwise, flourishing it in the face of the toll-gate keepers who disputed his passage. Perhaps a certain reverence attached to the dirty piece of closely written parchment, which could not be read under a quarter of an hour, and could not possibly be understood without far more knowledge than the generality of people possessed. It was probably well known that there was something peculiar about Clent people with regard to tolls, and the possession of the parchment perhaps was taken as an indisputable proof that the bearer was a Clent man, even though his rights were often disputed. But at the present day the charter and its exemptions are entirely obsolete, and not a single exemption can be claimed under it by an inhabitant of modern Clent.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLENT DURING THE COMMONWEALTH.

IN January, 1649, Andrew Tristram was presented to the living of Clent, but his name does not appear in the List of Vicars given in Nash's Worcestershire, and, therefore, probably there is no record of his incumbency in the Bishop's Registers at Worcester, whence Nash's list was derived. He was quite a young man at the time, not more than one and twenty years old, and was member of a family of Tristrams who lived at Moor Hall in Belbroughton for many years, several of whom were from time to time rectors of that parish. He married on the 17th December, 1650, Alice, the daughter of William Cox, of Clent; and a Dr. Tristram, who in after times wrote an autobiography of himself and a history of his family, says that she was a great heiress, and brought her husband "a very fine estate." This may have been so, but the will of her mother, Anna Cox, which was proved in Worcester in 1668, discloses no extraordinary wealth on her part; and her father was the third son of Thomas Cox, who himself, though possessing the Gate House in Clent, owned no other estate there that can be traced. Moreover, Alice Tristram had a sister married to Humphrey Wildey, of Worcester, who would naturally share her parent's property. At all events, it is pretty certain the "fine estate" was not in Clent.

On August 24th, 1653, Parliament passed another

Act affecting parish registers. It directed that registrars should be chosen in every parish for registering births and burials, who were to be approved of and sworn in by a justice of the peace. This change of entering births instead of baptisms fell under the displeasure of Thomas Walker, Vicar of Clent in after times, who has been already mentioned. "O ridiculum caput," he writes in a blank space in the register, "to prefer birth before baptism. Besides, the Church of England commands y^e Baptism of Infants to be registered; thou in opposition to it wilt register their births. O brave Reformation!" However, in accordance with the Act, Andrew Tristram, being duly elected by the parishioners, was sworn as Registrar on the 2nd of June, 1654, by Sir John Wyrley, Knt., a magistrate of Staffordshire. The same Act also established civil marriages, and no other marriages but these were to be valid within the Commonwealth. Persons who desired to be married were to give notice of their intention to the Registrar 21 days beforehand, and he was to publish it either on the three Lord's days next following, at the "close of the morning exercise;" or, if the parties wished, in the market-place next the church or chapel, on the three market-days in the next three weeks, between the hours of 11 and 2. Then the parties were to attend before a justice of the peace, who was to receive their solemn declaration that they took each other for husband and wife, and thereupon was to pronounce their marriage valid. The registrar was to be there with the register book of the parish, and to get the signature and attestation of the magistrate to the entry of each marriage so solemnised.

Many such marriages are entered in Clent register, duly signed by the various magistrates to whom the couples resorted, so that it is clear that the register of Clent was at this time continually travelling about. There was no magistrate in Clent, nor, indeed, nearer than Dunsley Hall, in Kinver parish, where John Whorwood lived, and it was to him that the Clent people usually went. But the signatures of Sir John Wyrley, Knt., of Hamstead Hall, near West Bromwich; Nicholas Pearsal, "Justice of Peace for the corporation of Kederminster, in Worcestershire;" and Richard Vernon, of Hanbury, are also found; and on one occasion the register travelled as far as Parkwood, in Warwickshire, where a marriage was celebrated before Samuel Evrall, a magistrate for that county.

The influence of Richard Baxter of Kidderminster was very great in this neighbourhood at that time, and in 1655 a document was drawn up by him known as the "Worcestershire Agreement," the object of which was to form a voluntary association of the ministers in the county, and a "true testimony against the Pope's ways." Baxter signs his name as "teacher of the Church at Kidderminster;" and there are 41 other signatures, among them being that of Andrew Tristram, "pastor of the Church at Clent," and Humphrey Waldron, "minister of Broom." This scheme, however, did not lead to any practical results.

Andrew Tristram left Clent in 1658, and became minister at Bridgnorth, whence he was ejected by the Act of Uniformity, in 1662. Calamy in his "Nonconformists' Memorial," in which an account is given of all persons so ejected, says he was "a man of more than

ordinary ability in preaching and prayer, and of upright life." Ejected from his living, Andrew Tristram turned his attention to medicine, and was admitted a licentiate of the College of Physicians, and practised for some time at Bridgnorth. The date of his death is unknown.

Andrew Tristram was succeeded at Clent by Thomas Baldwin, who also does not appear in Nash's List of Vicars. He was a young man, some 28 years old, and his name first appears in the register in 1657, certifying that a marriage had been performed by him in the parish church of Clent. In 1656 the Act establishing civil marriages had been confirmed by Parliament, but the clause which declared no other marriage to be valid was omitted, so that a way was opened for marriages in the church, which Baldwin seems prompt to have taken advantage of. The births of several children of his are entered in the register; and since the law required births and not baptisms to be entered, the vicar evaded the difficulty by baptising all children as soon as they were born, and he makes a note to this effect in 1660, after which date baptisms again are given.

Thomas Baldwin, however, found that he could not subscribe to the Act of Uniformity, which came into force on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24th, in 1662, and was called the Bartholomew Act; he resigned his living, so becoming one of the ejected. The last entry made by him in the register was on the 21st of July in that year, as is evidenced by a change in the character of the entries. Calamy says of him that he was a man of a sanguine, lively temper, and a sweet,

humble, affable behaviour; one of very extensive charity; ready to do good to the souls and bodies of those that came near him, and to condescend to those of the lowest degree; and that he was a solid, judicious and established preacher. He, after leaving Clent, ministered among the dissenters at Birmingham, where he died. Perhaps he was the son of Thomas Baldwin, minister of Chaddesley Corbett, who also was ejected by the same Act, and settled afterwards at Kidderminster, where he had been intimate with Baxter. But he kept on good terms with the established Church, as is shewn by the fact that when he died in February, 1693, the Vicar of Kidderminster, Richard White, preached his funeral sermon.

In 1640 the great tithes of Clent belonged to George Chambers, of Knight's Green, in Worcestershire, and he in that year leased them for 21 years at a yearly rent of 4*l.*, to Thomas Cookes of Bentley Pouncefoot, the brother of Mary, wife of John Sparry of Clent, and uncle of Anne, wife of Richard Amphlett. Chambers sided with the Royalists, and in consequence all his property had been sequestrated, these tithes among the rest, by the Parliamentary Commissioners. Thomas Cookes, therefore, petitioned the Commissioners in 1650 to restore him the tithes during the remainder of his lease. He says he was one of the committee for reducing the county of Worcester to Parliamentary obedience, thereby, no doubt, hoping to prove himself true to the cause. At all events, on the production of the lease, the commissioners allowed his petition, the smallness of the yearly rent having probably aroused suspicion.

The money given from time to time by various persons for the use of the poor of Clent was invested in 1654 in the purchase from Hester Cordiwen of a piece of land known as the Grove, or the Upper Grove; and on the 10th of October in that year it was surrendered by her to a body of trustees, composed of John Sparry, Gent., William Cox, John Underhill, John Cox of the Gate House, Richard Waldron the younger, and Thomas Nash. This piece of land is still in the hands of trustees, and the rent of it is distributed in bread on St. Thomas's Day in each year. Though Hester Cordiwen only sold the land, in after years she got the credit of founding the gift, and it is now known as Hester Cordiwen's charity.

Ambrose Pearman had given, by his will dated May 25th, 1651, 50s. to the poor of Clent, and this was probably part of the money invested in the purchase of the Grove. In 1658, William Cox, father of Andrew Tristram's wife, who described himself as a yeoman, gave the poor of Clent £3, the interest to be distributed yearly at Easter; and ten years afterwards his wife, Anne Cox, by her will gave an additional £2, to be devoted to the same use. In some lists of the charities of Clent the date of the will of Anne Cox is given as Sep. 17th, 1658, but this is an error, for the true date of the will, which is now at Worcester, is Dec. 9th, 1661; but she did not die till 1668, in which year she was buried at Clent on Feb. 11th.

The Act of 1601 having imposed on every parish the duty of providing for its own poor, it became a matter of some importance to consider who were the poor of a parish. Naturally the parish would permit

no outsiders to come in and gain a footing who would be likely to fall into poverty, and so increase the parochial burdens. In the Court Rolls many orders are to be found imposing penalties upon persons owning tenements, if they did not either remove their disorderly tenants, or give security to hold the inhabitants free from loss through their depredations; and it was but a step from this to exact bonds from responsible persons, by means of which the general body of parishioners would be relieved from the legal duties of providing for strangers if they should come to be in want. A list of many of these bonds relating to Clent exists in the parish chest, the date of the earliest being June 8th, 1624, when Edward Sarjeant and John Taylor were bound in the sum of £40 to the parishioners, to free the parish from all trouble and charges likely to arise from the first named person, his wife and children. Ten years later, Richard Jones, William Jones, and Thomas Pitt, were bound to the churchwardens in the same sum, to indemnify the parishioners against Richard Jones, his wife and children. In 1642 Richard was again bound to the overseers to free the people of Clent from any expense that might arise from an illegitimate child then to be born. There are in the list four more instances in which bonds were given previous to 1662, when Richard Foley, gent., was the bondsman in an obligation to save the parish from any cost arising from Richard Mansell and his family. In after years these bonds became much more numerous.

CHAPTER XIV.

CLENT AFTER THE RESTORATION.

ON the 29th of May, 1660, the Commonwealth came to an end, and King Charles II. entered London, being received on all hands with great acclamation.

Thomas Baldwin was succeeded in the living of Clent in 1662 by Walter Wheeler, another vicar whose name does not appear in Nash's list; but he held it only a few years, till his death in 1668. His burial is entered in the register on the 3rd of February in that year, and his will was proved at Worcester on the following 29th of January, being dated two days before his burial. He left all his goods to his wife Elizabeth, and they were valued at £99 os. 8*d.* His study of books was worth £18 os. 0*d.*, and he seems to have farmed in a small way, one item in the list of his property being a lot of hop-poles, valued at 10*s.* He was succeeded by Thomas Walker, Master of Arts. In a note to Nash's List of Vicars one Cole is said to have been incumbent before Walker, but this must be a mistake, since only one month elapsed between the burial of Wheeler and Walker's induction.

Thomas Walker, of whom I have previously spoken, held the vicarage for no less than 51 years. Entries in the parish register give the dates of his induction on March 3rd, 1668, and of his death on Jan. 1st, and his burial on Jan. 3rd, 1721, two years previously to which

he had resigned the living. A small square stone slab under the tower of the church remains, with this simple inscription, "To the pious memory of Thomas Walker, A.M., Vicar of Clent and Rowley, who died Jan. 1st, 1726, aged 84."

He was a member of Oxford University, having taken his degree from Alban Hall on the 3rd of July, 1666. He married at Churchill, on Nov. 27th, 1684, Anne Pretty, whose brother was afterwards the first master of Amphlett's school at Clent ; but it does not appear that he had any children. The registers during his incumbency are regularly and neatly kept, and his religious feeling is evidenced by the notes he frequently makes to the entries. To the burial of Daniel Wood, of Bromsgrove, on July 21st, 1677, he appends, "From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us;" and the same note is added to several other entries. He records that on Sunday, July 27th, 1679, the barn belonging to William Waldron, of Lower Clent, was set on fire by lightning, and that the fire spread to his dwelling-house ; "From lightning and tempest, good Lord, deliver us," he adds. A family of Quakers, named Mousall, came to live in the parish about 1695, and he enters the birth of a daughter on July 3rd, 1700, making the note, "From all false doctrine, heresy, and schism, good Lord, deliver us."

Several other notes relating to the parish were jotted down by the vicar. On Sep. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, in 1684, three women were buried, and he notes that he preached a funeral sermon for each of them. The death of John Waldron, one of the churchwardens, during his year of office, is noted in 1684 ; while on the 10th of February,

in 1688, four persons were lying dead at the same time in the parish, one of whom was buried at Belbroughton. In 1695 there was no wedding in Clent; while on Sunday, June 14th, 1697, two boys were drowned together, and were afterwards buried in the same grave. In 1708 the following entry occurs: "Mem. The first day that I wore my new surplice was upon Christmas-day in this year, being Saturday."

At this period it was usual, in the case of great calamities, or circumstances where an appeal for assistance might justly be made to a wide district, to issue what were called "Briefs," or circular letters, setting forth the facts under the authority of the crown, upon receipt of one of which in a parish, a house to house collection was made for its object. Mr. Walker kept a list of the Briefs for which collections were made in Clent from 1670 to 1705, which is still in existence. A few of the most interesting objects for which Clent money was subscribed are the following; but most of them are for losses by fire.

The first is dated Oct. 23rd, 1670, and is for redeeming Christians out of Turkish slavery, when £1 2s. 4d. was collected; and in 1676, £1 13s. 9½d. was got together for a fire at Northampton, "which," says the vicar, "in less than the space of six hours burnt to the ground the dwelling-houses of above seven hundred families, &c., the loss amounting to fifty-two thousand and eight pounds and upwards." For the rebuilding of St. Paul's in London, in 1678, £1 7s. 5d. was subscribed; while the redemption of enslaved Christians in Algiers and Sully, taken by Turkish pirates, again came before the Clent people in the same year, and £1 8s. was sub-

scribed. In 1681 a collection was made, amounting to £1 5s. 10d., for the French Protestant refugees, who had fled into this country. Other collections were made for the Protestant churches in Lesser Poland, and for the Orange refugees; and several more appeals for Christians in Turkey, and Protestants in Ireland and France, were made in the parish. In 1704 a collection was made for seamen's widows, "made so by a dreadful storm and tempest called an Hyrrcane, which happened Nov. 26th and 27th, 1703." There are 135 collections recorded in all.

The new manor of Church Clent had been so long in the hands of the King, before 1633, when it was sold by the crown to William Scriven and Philip Eden, that it had gained the popular name of the King's Holt, a name still often applied to it. I have been gravely assured many times that the land in Church Clent is "King's Hold," and not "copyhold," the similarity of the last syllable causing the name of a place to be confused with the tenure of land. Under the name of the King's Holt it, or at least the chief rent payable out of it, became the subject of litigation in 1678, when Mr. Walker commenced proceedings in the Exchequer against William Underhill, of Calcott Hill, who had purchased the manor from a Mr. Norrice in 1676. In these proceedings the old manor of Clent is called Jenett, or Chenett Clent, showing the influence of the mistake made by the clerks who drew up the Clent charter in giving a new name to the parish. The chief point of the dispute was that Underhill refused to pay the vicar his share of the chief rent due to him, which Mr. Walker said had been paid to his predecessors time out of mind.

Perhaps we know more about the matter now than the litigants did themselves, for Mr. Underhill, instead of making the defence, which he might rightly have done, that the sum, though payable to the vicar, was only received by him for the lord's pleasure, which lord he now himself was, denied that any such payment had ever been made, and so put himself clearly in the wrong; and in the end the court gave judgment in the vicar's favour. At the present time the vicar of Clent receives no yearly rent from Church Clent manor, such as the judgment awarded him, nor has he, apart from this, any claim to it.

But there were other matters in dispute between the vicar and Mr. Underhill. About 1672, Mr. Underhill and the tenants of his manor wished to enclose about 80 acres of common on Calcott Hill, which were then undivided from the common on Walton by any fence or mark; and the cattle of the tenants of both the old and the new manors pastured indiscriminately over the whole of the common land. An agreement was come to by which this enclosure was allowed, by which the Church Clent tenants undertook not to put any cattle on the remaining portion of the common when the enclosure was made. By the terms of this arrangement, which no doubt was put on record on the Court Rolls of the manor of Clent, and which has never, to my knowledge, been done away with, the tenants of lands in Church Clent have no rights upon the commons as they now exist in Clent, either on Walton hill or Clent hill. Walker seems to have been no party to this arrangement, for it is one of the grounds of his complaint that by this enclosure he is prevented from

enjoying the commons on Calcott hill. A number of witnesses gave evidence on this point, but the court gave the vicar no damages, nor, indeed, any decision upon it. It is not clear which fields, as they at present exist, represent the land thus enclosed.

Another complaint was, that Mr. Underhill refused to render the vicar a proper tithe on calves. Mr. Walker alleged that the custom was that he should receive a half-penny for every calf, and that if any parishioner had seven calves in one year, the vicar should receive for the seventh 3s. 4d., or the calf itself. In this he was borne out by the testimony of many of the parishioners who had had seven calves in one year; and Underhill himself did not dispute it as far as the parish generally was concerned, but only said that there was no such rule about the seventh calf in Church Clent; and in the end the vicar agreed to forego his seventh calf in Church Clent manor, if Mr. Underhill would peaceably pay him his half-pennies, and so this matter was settled.

As many as 22 witnesses were examined in this suit, and their evidence takes up a good deal of parchment, though much of it is mere reiteration. The enquiry was held at the "Rose and Crown" Inn at Bromsgrove, the landlord of which, at that time, was one George Fownes.

In the year 1676 a return was made to the bishops of the inhabitants of all parishes over the age of 16, and the form of faith they professed. In Clent, in that year, there were 160 such persons, all of them professing the Protestant religion. Of neighbouring parishes Belbroughton contained 500 conformists, and 5 non-

conformists; Broom, 31 conformists; Chaddesley Corbett, 447 conformists, 28 papists, and 5 non-conformists; Hagley, 274 conformists; Churchill, 28 conformists; and Halesowen, 554 conformists, 3 papists, and 4 non-conformists. The parish of Rowley Regis, then joined to Clent, contained 420 conformists, and no papists or non-conformists. The return was made by the minister and churchwardens of the several parishes.

The first gallery in Clent church was erected in 1675, when 12 persons joined together and built it for their own accommodation. The list of these persons is still extant, and if it was built by a fair selection from the Clent people, and was not merely a family affair, it shews in what a remarkable manner the names of Hill and Waldron preponderated in parochial nomenclature. Of these 12 persons there are 5 Hills and 5 Waldrons, only two other names being present, Green and Cole. Another gallery near the belfry was built in 1688, and though it is not stated that it was due to private enterprise, this was most probably the case. It contained 12 kneelings, which were allotted to 4 persons. Indeed, in after times, it is mentioned as having been built by two of the persons who had kneelings in it.

No old books of Churchwardens' accounts exist in Clent, but a few memoranda still remain. They contain no details of interest, being chiefly notifications of receipts and expenditures, and the reason of their existence is probably shewn by the fact that each of them indicates an excess of expenditure over receipts by the churchwardens. In 1675, Henry Waldron received £8, and spent £8 17s. 2d.; John Harvey, in 1699, spent £1 2s. 3d. more than he received. The next year

Henry Corden was £2 9s. 10d. out of pocket. There are notes for only two or three other years, in each of which a similar unsatisfactory state of affairs for the churchwardens existed.

Before 1681 Clent church possessed a peal of four bells, and in that year a new one was added to them and the four old ones recast, and they were rung together for the first time on the 7th of August in that year, the 10th Sunday after Trinity, A sixth bell, a treble, was added to them by subscription in 1701, and the peal of six was first rung together on Monday in Whitsun week, May 25th, 1702. Upon this bell were the names of Thomas Walker, the vicar, and Thomas Nash and Nicholas Pearman, the churchwardens. At the present time the peal still consists of six bells, but two of the bells which formed the peal in 1702 have been replaced by the present treble and tenor, as is shewn by the dates and inscriptions on them, which are as follows :—

1. 1718. William Creswell, John Waldron.
2. 1681. Beate Domine Beatorum.
3. 1681. Richard Waldron, Henry Bagley, Thomas Nash.
4. 1681. Bagley matle me.
5. 1681. Henry Bagley made me.
6. 1743. John Amphlett, Esq., John Perry, vicar, John Creswell and John Waldron, churchwardens. Abraham Hill, Richard White, Joseph Waldron, Thomas Waldron. John Cope made me 1743.

The following advertisement appeared in the *London Gazette* for April 10th, 1690. "Stolen or strayed from Mr. Thomas Walker's stable, vicar of Clent, in Stafford-

shire, a black nag, 6 years old, about 14 hands, a small white star, the further foot behind white, the grease fallen into the hoof, and the hair cut off both fetlocks behind. Whoever gives notice of him to Mr. Walker aforesaid, or to Michael Armestead at the 'Angel and Rose' in Newgate-street, shall have 20 shillings."

In 1679 an Act was passed imposing a penalty on the representatives of all persons who should be buried in anything but woollen, of £5. This was, as the Act says, "for the lessening of the importation of linen from beyond the seas, and the encouraging of the woollen and paper manufactures of this kingdom." An affidavit was to be brought within eight days of the burial that the deceased was not buried in linen, and frequent mentions of these affidavits are henceforth scattered about in the pages of the register; though in later times, some fifty years after, the notes are more usually to the effect that affidavits had not been brought to the vicar, than that he had duly received them. There is one entry in the register of a burial in linen, that of Anne, wife of Joseph Amphlett, on the 28th of May, 1715; she was the daughter of Sir Charles Lyttelton, Bart., of Hagley.

In 1694 another Act was passed affecting parish registers. Certain rates were granted King William upon marriages, births, and burials, for five years, "for carrying on the war against France with vigour." Mr. Walker made an entry of the Act in the register, and adds the comment, "so that for that term hereafter the births of children must be registered as well as the baptism, as I conceive." This he did for a short period, but the entry of the birth is omitted after a year's time,

and baptism only is recorded. At intervals in the register occurs the signature of one Edward Corbett, who was the government officer appointed to inspect the registers, testifying that this duty had been duly performed by him, and the sum accounted for.

As I have said, upon every parish was imposed the duty of maintaining its own poor. The question as to who were to be considered as the poor of each parish was a matter of considerable dispute until 1674, when it was decided that any person who should reside undisturbed for forty days in a parish should be considered as belonging to it, or as it was termed, should gain a settlement in it; but that within that time any stranger should be sent back whence he came by the order of two justices, unless he either rented a house worth ten pounds a year, or could give a bond to secure the parish against any charges arising from future poverty.

I have already mentioned that a list of these bonds given to the parishioners of Clent is still in existence, but the list of orders of removal under the Act does not commence for seventy or eighty years after the above date. Frauds were often committed under this statute, the poor of one parish being bribed to go into another and remain concealed there for forty days, when they would gain a settlement in a fresh place; and so it was enacted that the forty days should only be considered to run after a notice had been delivered in writing to the overseers, of the number of an incomer's family and the place of his abode. But parish officers in some cases turned out no more honest in regard to their own than they had been with respect to other parishes, and

connived at these intrusions, taking no proper steps on receiving the notices. So as all the parishioners were supposed to be interested in the prevention of such intrusions, it was further enacted that the forty days should commence only after the due publication of the notice after divine service in the church. There were, besides the condition of residence, four ways in which a settlement might be obtained ; first, by being rated in the parish and paying the rates ; second, by serving a year in some parish office ; third, by serving an apprenticeship in the parish ; and fourth, by being hired into service for a year, and continuing in it the whole time.

These statutes nearly destroyed any circulation of labour, and to restore this in some degree, it was enacted in 1696, that a poor person might remove from one parish to another provided he took with him a certificate from the officers of the parish he left acknowledging his settlement, and of course his chargeability to them if he came to poverty. This rule seems to have been practised before it was the subject of an Act of Parliament, for a list of such certificates received by the officers of Clent exists in the parish chest, and the date of the first one is 1677. The list reaches down to the year 1780.

It was the custom for the poor children of the parish to be apprenticed to the parishioners, each one in his turn, to learn some trade, usually that of farming or housewifery ; though, if the person whose turn it was to take an apprentice could find some one else who was willing to do so for him, it appears that he was released from the obligation. A list of parish in-

dentures between the years 1683 and 1817 is in the parish chest.

The charities of Clent do not seem to have received many additions before the end of the seventeenth century, to those already mentioned. In 1660 John Sparry by his will gave the parishioners of Clent £20, the interest to be bestowed according to the discretion of his executor, Richard Amphlett. This gentleman expended ten pounds in repairing one of the cottages belonging to the parishioners, and the remainder was paid over to the parish officers by his descendant, John Amphlett, in 1751. In 1698 John Smith gave 50 shillings, and Thomas Smith four years later another 50 shillings, the interest to be expended in penny and twopenny loaves, and distributed to deserving objects of charity on St. Thomas's Day in each year.

In 1686 a History of Staffordshire was written by Dr. Robert Plot, and Clent being at that time reckoned in that county, of course it is mentioned in the book. He recounts the history of St. Kenelm, and calls the place where the infant king's body was found Cowbach or Cowdale. This latter name does not now exist, but it is very probable that at one time it did, for an old family connected with the parish bears Cowdale as a surname, and they doubtless came by it from some ancestor living at a place of that name at the time when surnames were growing into existence. The only other object of interest for Dr. Plot's History in the parish at this time, besides the tumuli on Clent Heath, was the old hedge-bank that runs up the side of the Knoll Hill, which has already been mentioned.

It must not be forgotten that for all the long years

since 1204, when King John and Ralph Somery exchanged manors, the yearly rent of £4 18s. had been paid to the King, except during the short time it had been granted to Hugh Wrottesley, by the lord of the manor of Clent, whoever he might happen to be, according to the agreement then come to. In 1672, however, an Act of Parliament was passed authorising the King to sell this rent, together with many others of the same nature. It was accordingly sold to Lord St. John and Ralph Bucknall, and in the course of time came into the possession of Lord Boston's family, from whom it has quite lately been purchased by Lord Lyttelton.

CHAPTER XV.

CLENT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

THE charities of Clent received a notable addition in the year 1704, by the foundation of Amphlett's School. By deed dated 30th Nov., 1704, and by will also dated 25th April, 1705, John Amphlett devoted the sum of £200 to the purpose of paying a fit and able person to teach an "English School," or as far as the rules of grammar in Latin, and for instructing gratis six children of poor persons who were natives of Clent. In 1704 he had conveyed to trustees the site for the school, on which was then situated a cottage, the residence of a Richard Waldron; and on the 2nd of July the school was commenced to be built, being completed on the 1st of October. No time was lost in beginning school work, for the first schoolmaster, Humphrey Pretty, the brother of the Vicar's wife, began to teach in it on the second of the same month. The next year, the old house having been pulled down, a new dwelling was erected for the schoolmaster, which took three months to build, being begun on Sept. 11th, and finished on the same day of December. The school has been carried on in the same buildings ever since this date. Over the front door of the schoolhouse is the following inscription:—

"To the pious memory of John Amphlett, Esq. He was a person illustrious for his exemplary Humility,

Justice, and Charity, and even whilst living became the Founder of this School, but died whilst designing its more lasting advancement."

Other charities were established soon after this time. Solomon Smith, in 1712, gave £5 to the poor, the interest to be paid annually to widows who were deserving objects of charity; and in the same year John Maris surrendered all his copyhold estate in Clent to trustees, to divide the annual proceeds, with the consent of the vicar for the time being, among such of the poorest inhabitants of Clent as received no weekly pay from the parish. The lands were Covey Hassells and Dead Marsh, and contain about seven acres. The next year William Cole by will left two pieces of land called Covey Hassells and Long Furlong to the same trustees for the same purpose. The charity is now known as "Cole and Maris's Charity," and the proceeds of these fields are distributed every year in accordance with the intentions of the founders, on St. Thomas's Day.

It appears that some time before 1731, Gilbert Cole of Reddall in Broom, had left an annuity of 10s. to be paid by his representatives out of his property in Belbroughton; for his son, by his will dated June 2nd in that year, confirmed this bequest, and directed his grandson William, and his heirs, to continue the payment. How this payment came to cease is not known, but it is not received at the present time.

There were in the possession of the parishioners of Clent, in 1735, a piece of land called the Mawles, and a coppice called Shortwoods, the rents of which were devoted to the same purpose as those derived from

Humphrey Penn's bequest in 1616; but how they became possessed of them does not appear. The Mawles is still in the possession of the parishioners, but Shortwoods has been sold to Lord Lyttelton, and the money invested. In 1735 a piece of land on Clent Hill, the hedge-banks of which are still very evident on the right hand of the ridge leading up from Adam's Hill, was exchanged with Sir George Lyttelton, Bart., then lord of the manor, for four acres of land on Lower Clent Common, near Thicknall farm, on the condition that the land on the hill was suffered to lie waste and unenclosed. The new piece of land lay probably at the Lower Hagley end of Thicknall farm, adjoining the field now called Broadwaters, and was afterwards exchanged for other land with John Amphlett. The rent of this land also went to the same uses as that of Humphrey Penn.

In 1756 William Tayler left £10 to the poor of Clent, to be laid out at the discretion of his trustees. This sum, in 1818, was in the hands of John Amphlett, but it is not known what has become of it. No other charity was founded until the end of the century, when the Sunday School was established by Thomas Waldron, of the Field House, in 1799, who by his will directed that £500 should be invested for the purpose of maintaining this school, or of clothing, educating, and bringing up such poor children of Clent as the trustees should think proper. In 1802 the sum was invested in Consols, and the yearly dividend arising from it is £21 19s. Of this, £10 annually is paid by the owner of the Field House estate to the master of the Sunday School, and the balance is distributed as the

said owner thinks proper, this sum having come to be considered a charge on the Field House estate, rather than the proceeds of money invested in Consols, which is really the case.

Scattered about in the parish register, and in other books now in the parish chest, are many notices concerning the galleries in the church. In 1715, the gallery built in 1688 is called the "pew that joineth the Bell Toller," built "a greate while agoe" by Thomas Hill and Henry Cordiwen. In this year, Thomas Hill, who was entitled to five kneelings in it, sold four of them to Joseph Cleeve, and the fifth to widow Richards, who in turn disposed of it to Henry Creswell, of Hollow Cross, in 1720. This gallery is noticed also in 1713, when it is called "the little gallery on the north side below the north door." In this year Henry Cordiwen sold his two kneelings in it to Francis Ashwell.

In 1720, this gallery was enlarged, and five additional seats gained thereby, which were divided among the existing proprietors with the exception of Henry Creswell, who, as he did not subscribe to the alterations, had no additional seat. In the list given of the proprietors, the man who, in 1713, is called Francis Ashwell, is denominated Francis Ashfield, an instance of the uncertainty attaching to the spelling of surnames in parish registers. The last entry touching this gallery deserves to be quoted in full:—"August 14, 1760. Whereas Joseph Cox is entitled to a quarter of a kneeling in y^e old Gallery adjoining y^e Bellfrey, in right of his father, John Cox of Holy Cross; the said Joseph Cox, for a valuable consideration, hath sold and assigned over y^e said quarter part of y^e kneeling aforesaid to

George Green." Of what use a quarter of a kneeling could be to any man, or what "valuable consideration" was given for it, does not appear.

In 1721, twenty-four persons equally subscribed to erect a gallery at the west end of the church, "not appropriated to any particular house, but peculiarly adapted to the ancient laudable and pious custom of Psalmody, or singing of Psalms;" and this gallery, it appears by the entry relating to a sale of a seat in the "old gallery at the steeple end," adjoined that structure. Both the names of the original founders, and the set of rules by which they bound themselves, is still in existence. In the course of time these kneelings acquired a money value, five shillings being the sum usually paid for them; so that the singing in the church was carried on in a kind of hereditary manner, a seat in the singing gallery being procurable only by the families of the original founders, or by purchase from them. But the hereditary singers did not entirely approve of seats being sold without the consent of all of them, and in 1754 the decision was come to that no sale should be valid without the consent of the minister and the majority of the proprietors; but at the same time all sales and changes that had already taken place were ratified. The last mention of this gallery is about 1800, when a list was made out giving the names of the original proprietors, and of those who then held the seat allotted to each of them.

There are other entries touching various seats in the church which were sold at different times. On October 22nd, 1718, John Rabole, junior, bought of Dorothy Woodward a seat in the "Knave's Alley, being the

lowest but one under the stairs." "April 12, 1722. John Raybould bought of Joseph Creswell a kneeling in a new pew in the South Isle, next but one to the stairs under the old gallery." "Memorandum. Samuel Harbigge pretended to a title to two seats in the gallery on the south side of the church, by a purchase from William Penn, after the said seats were conveyed to Edward Lythall by a mortgage, and copy of Court Roll. The affair in dispute was referred by the two parties to Mr. Thomas Raybould, of Amblecote, and Edward Waldron, of Clent, on the 17th of June, 1769, who decreed that the two seats should belong to the said Edward Lythall and his heirs for ever." That a seat in the church should be mortgaged seems curious enough, but that this mortgage should be entered upon the Court Rolls of the manor seems incredible.

One kneeling in the "Large Isle coming from the church door," came into the possession of Joseph Waldron, on his marriage with the daughter of James Wall, who was dead. Joseph sold it to his brother Thomas, and in March, 1761, Thomas assigned it over for a valuable consideration to George Welch. In 1790 William Timmings bought Welch's house with everything thereto belonging except the seat above mentioned. In the same year Mr. Timmings bought William Clive's house at Clatterbach; in 1794, property at Holy Cross belonging to a man of the name of Mence, and occupied by Joseph Pearman, butcher; and in 1797 a cottage at Oldmill Brook, belonging to Richard Chambers, of Whitbourne Court, Herefordshire, and in the occupation of Thomas Clive. All these properties had seats in the

church attached to them, of which the purchaser became possessor.

No doubt all these purchases and rearrangements had led to considerable disputes concerning the seats in the church, for in 1768 a faculty was obtained from the consistory court at Worcester to allot proper seats and kneelings to the owners, occupiers and possessors of houses and lands in the parish, "paying due regard to the quality of the persons, the value of their respective estates, and the seats and kneelings they lately possessed." Seven parishioners formed a committee, and carried out this re-allotment; and from the record of the proceeding, it appears that there were thirty pews in the church, varying in capacity from six to three persons. These allotments were made in 1772; but six years afterwards we find the vicar again setting the example of parting with seats for a "valuable consideration." In 1778 Mr. Perry assigned one of his kneelings to Mr. Thomas Hill, for his tenant at Halfmore.

In 1719 Thomas Walker resigned the living, and was succeeded by Edward Sheward, M.A., of Merton College, Oxford, who had acted as Mr. Walker's curate for the two preceding years. He was member of a family living at Stoney-lane in Tardebig parish, and one of his first acts, on becoming vicar was to pull down the old vicarage-house and build a new one. This is recorded in the register as having taken place on the 26th of May, 1724, but whether this date marks the commencement or termination of the operations does not appear. The existing Vicarage is the one built by Edward Sheward.

Edward Sheward's first wife, Anna Maria Sheward,

died in 1733; and he married secondly, March 24th, 1736, Sarah Smith of Clent, and by each wife he had several children. He died in 1736, and was buried at Clent, Dec. 8th of that year.

He was succeeded by John Perry, who was inducted in July, 1737. He was of Pembroke College, Oxford, and was probably a young man, as he had taken his degree only the year previously, though he seems to have been already married when he came to Clent. His wife was Agnes Margareta, a daughter of Walter Littleton, of Lichfield, connected also with the Talbots, being second cousin of Lord Chancellor Talbot, through which connection her husband perhaps secured the living. Mr. Perry by her had a family of eleven children. He held the living for forty-four years, dying of a mortification in his foot on September 14th, 1780. A newspaper notice of him says, "He was blest with a full and regular flow of spirits and good memory, which he preserved to his last hour, and bore his afflictions with unparalleled fortitude. He was a man of general philanthropy, good nature, and benevolence. An indulgent husband, a tender parent, a most able, diligent, and faithful minister, a most useful and pathetic preacher, a steady friend and good neighbour, a most delightful, entertaining, and instructive companion, the gentleman, Christian, scholar, poet, and divine."

John Perry was succeeded in the living by his son, Littleton Perry, who was born on Feb. 14th, 1746, and christened at Clent; he was a B.A. of Magdalen Hall, Oxford, and if all the tales still extant about him in the parish are true, he was no worthy successor of so excellent a father. Although his relationship with

the Lytteltons of Hagley was a very distant one, his Christian name, though rightly spelled Littleton, and as such entered in the register at his baptism, became at once attracted into the same mode of spelling as that of the neighbouring noble family, and as such he signs it. The time of his incumbency seems to have been a very disorderly one, the registers being badly kept, and parochial affairs generally in disorder. He held the incumbency, nevertheless, for something like thirty-seven years.

In 1740 there was a fire of such extent at Oldmill farm, that an account of it found its way into the London *Daily Post* for Thursday, April 3rd. In less than an hour, in spite of immediate assistance and the nearness of the brook, the whole of the farm buildings were consumed. It burnt also three cottages with their furniture, and all a wheelwright's tools, and part of his stock; and besides this, a sum of £40 in cash that was in one of the houses was melted, other considerable damage being done.

A public meeting of the parishioners of Clent was held on Dec. 12th, 1753, and certain byelaws were drawn up and agreed upon concerning several small charges and expenses. Among these regulations was one concerning sacramental wine; the churchwardens were to allow sixteen bottles yearly, and with an attention to little things that was remarkable, it was ordered that the bottles were to be returned. The churchwardens were to be allowed three shillings each for their attendance at visitations at Bromsgrove or Kidderminster, and sixpence extra if the visitation was held at a further distance than these towns, while the vicar was to have five shillings wherever the visitation was held.

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The vicar, on his part, agreed that parishioners should always be allowed to search the register or the parish accounts free; while it was ordered that twenty-five shillings only should be the ringing money, and new bell-ropes were to be provided when required, instead of, as was apparently the custom, a new set being used every year.

The churchyard in 1770 was bounded on the north and west sides by a wall, and on the south and east by railings. These fences had been maintained by a system of doles, by which a certain distance was allotted to every chief house in the parish, whose owner had to keep the allotted portion in repair. It was found impossible, however, to continue this system; no doubt each owner took a different view of the amount of repairs needful, and the best way of carrying them out; and probably the fences assumed a very patched appearance. However, extensive repairs were needful in 1770, and instead of continuing the custom, it was agreed that the wall should be entirely rebuilt, and that each person who had property in the wall should pay according to the dole that was due from him. One Samuel Crane agreed to build the wall for thirty guineas, and the work was carried out. A list exists in the parish chest of "doles about the churchyard of Clent, in the county of Stafford, to what persons and farms they belong unto to keep the same in repair, transcribed out of a small book wrote by the Rev. Thomas Walker, when vicar of Clent, by one William Waldron." The original list is corrected by the transcriber to the time he wrote, about 1770, the total length of the wall being 84 yards, 5 inches, and a stile as well.

Richard Amphlett had come to live in Clent soon after 1660, and in 1726 a private Act of Parliament was obtained by John Amphlett, his grandson, for certain family purposes, from which may be gathered the names of many Clent people whose property had then been purchased by the family. Among them are Thomas Cox, Henry Corden, John Corden, John Hill, William Manning, Samuel Foley, gent., Samuel Hickman, and Henry Hinckley. The great tithes of Clent had also been purchased, though the previous owner is not mentioned, and they were worth then yearly £70. Much money, says the Act, had been laid out in additional buildings, and the present stables at Clent House no doubt form a portion of these buildings, as the date 1709 is carved on a stone over one of the doors.

Several estates in Clent had changed owners before 1800. Calcott Hill, together with the lordship of Church Clent Manor, had passed from the Underhills; and from the court rolls it appears that Samuel Barton, D.D., Sarah French, spinster, John Woven and Jane his wife, and three maiden ladies, Jane, Ann, and Matilda Manning, were successively the owners of it. Before 1799 John Hollington had exchanged an estate at Ombersley for Ann Manning's share, and in that year held it jointly with the other two sisters. It remained in the possession of members of these two families till 1856; and about 1878 the other two shares were purchased by William Hollington, John Hollington's representative, who is the present owner. The Field House had been purchased from the Waldrons by the Dudleys, while a London merchant of the name of Liell had

bought the property of the Coxes, and had built old Clent Grove, which is now pulled down, and had laid out the grounds, building the old castle at Adam's Hill to imitate a ruin. Much property in Clent, too, including Clent Hall, had passed into the possession of the Rev. John Durant, rector of Hagley, who by his marriage with one of the daughters of William Waldron, of Walton House, became possessed of a share of his father-in-law's land also.

The four stones on Clent Hill were set up before 1773. That they were not in their present position in 1686, when Dr. Plot wrote his account of Clent, is quite certain, for that painstaking observer makes no mention of them, as he would surely have done had they been there to notice. In a *Guide to Clent*, written about 1830, by William Timmings, they are said to have been erected by George, Lord Lyttelton, in imitation of a Druidical monument; and no doubt these stones formed a part of the general scheme for the decoration of the neighbourhood of Hagley Hall carried out by the aforesaid nobleman, which comprised a monument on the top of Wychbury Hill, a castle at the top of Hagley Park, in which much of the stone from the ruins of Halesowen Abbey was used up, a Palladian bridge and a Temple of Theseus in the park itself, and a Druidical monument on the top of Clent Hill. Probably also the clumps of Scots Firs scattered about over the common, and now fast perishing, were planted at the same time.

It is strange how completely the origin of these stones has been forgotten in the comparatively short space of time that has elapsed since they were put

in position. Many traditions have sprung up around them, one which itself is perhaps forgotten calling them "Ossian's grave." It has been gravely alleged on the strength of these four stones, that Clent Hill was one of the chief seats of Druidical worship in England, and they have been coupled in antiquity with Stonehenge and Carnak in Brittany. It is said also that originally each stone stood in a different country, the four being Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, and Shropshire. This statement is quite groundless, but probably arose from the fact that before the Boundary Act which followed the Reform Bill of 1832, which altered the boundaries of many counties, Clent was in the county of Stafford, while Hagley and Halesowen were in Worcestershire and Shropshire respectively. But the limits of these parishes never approached the top of Clent Hill, while Warwickshire was as far distant as Tardebig, six or seven miles away. The stones themselves came out of a quarry in Hagley Park, where stone of quite the same nature as that of which they are composed is to be found.

Clent people, either from the influence Mr. Walker, their former vicar, had possessed over them, or from their own traditionary feelings, seem to have had a great liking for the Stuarts. The 29th of May was an especial feast-day in Clent; the day on which the King came back again was a day of universal festivity. Early in the morning the people, young and old, went to the woods and fetched oak-boughs enough to decorate the church tower, so much so that the top of it had the appearance of a gigantic tree. The boughs, often of large size, were pulled up to the top with ropes, and

on the present battlements are deep indentations worn into the stone by this means. The houses of the villagers also were decorated with oak-boughs, and everybody wore oak-apples; and it was the day on which village clubs met and walked in procession about the village. But these festivities have not taken place now for many years.

This was a greater festival than May-day itself, though on that day also the general custom of carrying garlands was not neglected. Towards the end of the century the Temple of Theseus in Hagley became a place of great resort for all the country side on May morning. As soon as it was light crowds of people would congregate, and three or four bands be in attendance. It is certain that this was a modern observance, as the Temple itself was not in being before the first Lord Lyttelton's time; and the usage probably came to an end in 1826, when the public were stopped from going when they liked to Hagley Park. There was one inhabitant of Clent to whom these old observances were dear, for William Timmings, the author of the first guide to Clent, about this time set up a Maypole in one of his own fields not far from the church.

In 1788 the common adjoining Thicknall farm, called Clent Lower Common, or Clent Heath, was enclosed and divided up among several proprietors, Thomas Waldron, of the Field House, having the lion's share. To buy off the opposition of the small landowners of the parish, whose shares in the proposed enclosure would have been very small, a portion of the common amounting to twenty-one acres was assigned to Thomas Waldron, charged with the annual payment of £15, which

was to be divided every year by the overseers among all the ratepayers of Clent in proportion to the amount they paid to the poor-rate, with the exception of the owner, whoever he might be, of Calcott Hill, who was especially excluded from any participation in the affair. The remaining land was divided up in proportion to certain specified property of the several owners who participated in the enclosure, and their rights over the rest of the common in the parish on Clent Hill and Walton Hill, before belonging to the property, were by this allotment extinguished.

The oldest monument at present existing in the churchyard or church is one commemorating the death of one Thomas Nash, in 1691. It is a square block of sandstone outside the church, above the chancel door, and is now nearly illegible. The inscription is in Latin, and it records that Thomas Nash was "an ingenious man, of benefit to his generation by planting apple-trees." But Mr. Nash's apple-trees are not in existence now, nor any tradition as to where they were planted. No locality in the parish bears Nash's name, though many fields bear the names of owners who are not mentioned in the parochial records. The tombstones in the churchyard are not as a rule old; the material of which they were made was the red sandstone of the district, and it perishes fast, and many which could be easily read a few years ago are now illegible. Nor are there any very remarkable either for design or epitaph. In many country churchyards quaint inscriptions are to be found. On the tombstone recording the death of Joseph Clive and his wife in 1758 and 1776 respectively, is the following verse :—

“ Oh cruel death, could'st thou not spare
Such faithful friends that were sincere ;
Who joined their hearts as well as hands
In wedlock chaste, and pleasing bands ?
In Love they liv'd, in Peace they dyed,
Their lives desired but yet denied.”

Dorothy Brettell's tombstone bears the following verse. She was the wife of Joseph Brettell, and died in 1769.

“ Who can the Fatal stroke of death withstand,
Whose dart is guided by the Almighty Hand ?
In youth and age let grace and virtue shine,
And let our Death put thee in Miend of thine.”

Although not belonging to the period treated of in this chapter, it may be well, while I am on the subject of tombstones, to record a few more epitaphs of a later period.

Harry Oxford died in 1809. Here is his epitaph, which does not depend upon rhyme at all events for its excellence :—

“ Before my friends all
I go to pave the way,
I hope in Christ
They will prepare
To come and follow me.”

Mary, the wife of John Oxford, who died in 1812, is thus commemorated :—

“ This stone out of a true respect
To her I lov'd I here erect.
Her life I priz'd, her death lament,
But now must learn to be content,
In hopes to gain that happy shore
Where we shall meet to part no more.”

Moses Clive died in 1827, and on his tombstone is the following verse :—

“How loved, how valued once, avails thee not,
To whom related or by whom begot ;
A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
’Tis all thou art, and all the great shall be.”

Thomas Southall, who died in June, 1808, has this triplet on his tombstone :—

“The best of Husbands to a wife sincere,
The fondest father of his child most dear,
This is the man that lies interred here.”

A quaintly carved tombstone till lately stood facing the road in front of the church tower, in memory of John Pearman, “who died of a consumption” in 1785, aged 24. At the top of the stone above the inscription was carved a group of agricultural implements, consisting of plough, rake, fork, and billhook, surrounded by other tools connected with a farming life. Two sheaves of corn were also represented, nor was the bottle omitted, nor a shady hat. But some years ago many grave-stones were laid flat in the grass for the sake of an appearance of uniformity ; and the quaintness of this one did not save it from this fate. The consequence is that these carvings have been obliterated, even in the few years that have since elapsed, by the hobnailed boots of young parishioners, which have worn away the carvings on the soft red sandstone. The greatest destruction of monuments, however, took place at the restoration of the church in 1864. Builders and contractors have no sentimental feelings about the memorials to the fathers of the parish, and always at a restoration monuments without number are destroyed.

CHAPTER XVI.

CLENT IN MODERN TIMES.

THINGS in Clent got worse and worse during the incumbency of Lyttelton Perry, as he called himself, who was known in the parish, and through all the country round as Parson Perry. His proceedings caused great scandal, and at length some of the parishioners determined to take steps to procure his suspension. A notice of a meeting to be held for that purpose was to be read in the church on a certain Sunday after service. Parson Perry this morning was somewhat excited, as indeed he often was in the pulpit, and preached a long sermon of such a character that when it came to an end only some half dozen-persons remained in the church. At that time the pulpit was one of the old-fashioned sort, consisting of three pew-like boxes, one above the other stepwise, the lowest for the clerk, the middle one for prayers, and the topmost for the sermon. As Mr. Perry finished his discourse, up started the clerk, Jephtha Craddock by name, in his box below the parson, and began to read the notice convening the meeting. Parson Perry listened with great gravity for some moments, for it was little time before he began to understand the purport of the document; but when at last he did comprehend, he seized the heavy tasselled cushion on which he used to rest his sermons, and hurled it down upon the poor clerk's head.

But the meeting was held nevertheless, on the 8th February, 1816; and in addition to the business for which it was convened, it had to consider what should be done to compensate the parish clerk for this unwarranted attack upon him. The minutes of the meeting are to be read in the parish Order Book, and it appears that a voluntary rate was voted to provide for the expenses both of the action taken by the parish for the removal of their vicar, and of any proceedings which might be adopted by Jephtha Craddock, and a committee of the parish was appointed to carry out the business. Ultimately the suspension of the vicar was procured, and shortly afterwards he resigned the living.

Mr. Perry was succeeded by the Rev. Joseph Sharpe, who was presented to the living in 1817, being then an elderly man. His mother had been in the Royal household, and he himself was a native of Cheshire. He held the living till 1825, when he died, and was buried with his wife under the parish chest in the vestry adjoining the church. The Rev. Adolphus Hopkins was the next vicar, who was a relative of Mr. Sharpe's. He had been curate of the parish for the two years previous to that gentleman's death, and he was instituted to the vicarage on June 19th, 1825.

There were discontented spirits in Clent in Mr. Hopkins' time. About 1832 many letters attacking the vicar were written to the *Birmingham Argus* by one who signed himself "The Poor Man's Friend." The letters are long and wandering, but the chief complaint seems to have been that the charities were unfairly dispensed to those who had no need of them, while

a "pious order of petticoat saints" had been joined by the "parish Prime Minister," who had the best share of the gifts. The writer evidently liked a good dinner when he could get one, for he complained that the vicar on tithe-paying days had only six of the tithe-payers to dine with him, and the small tithe-payers were excluded "by his wife's special command" from dining with their "Calvinistic preacher." Much more of this sort of stuff is to be found in the correspondence, which spread over several years. The writer was one Richard Wight, who lived in Church Row.

Mr. Hopkins held the vicarage till his death on June 19th, 1855, when the Rev. Samuel Oxley, who had previously been curate of Hagley, became vicar; but he held the living only for a short time, exchanging it for that of Long Bennington, in Lincolnshire, with the Rev. George Halls. Mr. Halls resigned the living in 1886, being followed by the Rev. Frederick Robert Lawson, the present vicar.

In 1811, a new vestry was built adjoining the church; and in 1837 the church itself was enlarged by the addition of a north aisle, with a gallery. The cost of the alteration was £710 13s. In 1864 the church was thoroughly restored, or rather rebuilt, as only the tower and chancel remained of the original building; and it was re-opened on the 19th April, 1865. The galleries were abolished and the arch under the tower thrown open, and 80 additional sittings obtained. The cost of the restoration was £2,660 18s., of which sum, Miss Goodman of Worcester, a sister of Mrs. Durant of Clent Hall, gave £600, and £624 17s. 4d. was borrowed from the funded property belonging to the trustees of

the Church lands, which was paid back by twelve yearly instalments. The remainder of the money was contributed by the parishioners and the neighbouring gentry.

The first clock was put up in 1682, and duly notified by the Churchwardens to the proper authorities at Worcester at the following visitation. This clock remained in its place till the beginning of this century, when it was replaced by a new one, and either sold or given to the parish of Belbroughton, where I believe it still does duty in the church tower. But the new clock at Clent was not satisfactory, and another was procured about 1870, at a cost of £120, which was raised by subscription among the parishioners.

In 1858, the churchyard was enlarged by taking in a portion of the glebe field on its south side, at an expense of £49 4s. 4d., the vicar giving the land; and again in 1884, when a plot was added to it at the north-east corner which had formerly been the garden to a public-house called "The Gate," which had been pulled down some years previously by the owner, Mrs. Durant of Clent Hall. This plot was gained by exchanging for it an equal quantity of the glebe field adjoining Clent Hall garden; and in this case the vicar did not give the land, the estimated annual value of which is £2; but in lieu of paying the rent, the parishioners undertook to keep the churchyard in order, a duty which had previously devolved upon the vicar. The cost of the enlargement was £78.

During all the years I have been writing about, Rowley Regis was a chapelry attached to Clent, the vicar of Clent being vicar of Rowley also. During the

incumbency of the Rev. Lyttelton Perry a great number of Rowley people came to Clent to be married, as if the vicar had preferred that couples should come to him at Clent rather than that he should journey to their native parish to tie the nuptial knot. But in 1841, an Act of Parliament was obtained severing Rowley Regis from Clent and erecting it into a separate parish. The inconvenience of the union had long been felt, and is well set out in the preamble to the Act. It states that the vicarage house of Clent was six miles from Rowley, and that while Clent was an agricultural parish with a population of 900, Rowley Regis was a mining district with a population of 10,000. It says that at this time there was no resident officiating minister, nor a house for one; though it would appear that a Rev. George Barrs was curate there then, and had been so for many years previously. On the other hand, the glebe of Rowley consisted of something like 60 acres, and was worth for building purposes £10,000, though the rental was never more than £120 per annum. It was therefore enacted that after the death of the Rev. Adolphus Hopkins, the parishes should be separated, the glebe sold, and a vicarage-house built with part of the proceeds, while during the remainder of the incumbency of Mr. Hopkins the stipend of the curate was fixed at £150 a year. Thus a connection which had existed from the time of Roger de Somery was put an end to.

With regard to the old church at Rowley, Shaw, in his *History of Staffordshire*, says, "the fabric has the least of anything remarkable of any one I ever saw. Its order seems of the Gothic age, but it has been

patched up and enlarged with bricks and mortar;" and further on he calls it "an unseemly structure." This account was written towards the close of the eighteenth century. Outside the church, however, there was a curious object, Shaw's description of which I give. There is, he says, "a charnel cave left open in the churchyard containing a great number of human skulls and bones, to serve, I suppose, as a *memento mori* to the living villagers, and to tell them that to that complexion they must come at last." This charnel-hole was to be seen many years after this description was written.

The old church at Rowley was pulled down and a new one begun just before the passing of the Act of Parliament above mentioned. The corner-stone was laid on Friday, April 24th, 1840, by the Rev. George Barrs, M.A., who had been curate there for forty years.

In November, 1827, Clatterbach pool burst through its embankment. It was situated in the valley above Clent Church, and was about two acres in extent, and very deep, as may now be seen from the steepness of the banks. The water from this pool worked some scythe mills in the occupation of Mr. Thomas Waldron of Belbroughton, and the motive power was supplied by an overshot water-wheel 35 feet in diameter. The forges were entirely swept away, and the inundation caused great damage lower down the valley.

There was great distress in the Lye and the districts around Stourbridge in 1834, and numbers of men were employed in lowering the cutting in the sandstone rock between Oldmill and Holy Cross, through which the

Stourbridge and Bromsgrove highroad passes. The level of the road was lowered considerably, and the soil used in filling up the lower ground at either end of the cutting. The hill, before it was cut through, was called Button's Bank, a name now all but forgotten. The date 1834 is carved in large figures on the east side of the cutting, but the figures are now getting somewhat indistinct.

By this time, however, a great event was at hand in the history of Clent. After the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832, an Act was passed for rectifying county boundaries, and by it Clent was transferred from Staffordshire to Worcestershire again, after having been severed from that county for something like 800 years. During the time of its localisation in Staffordshire it had formed part of the hundred of Seisdon, and since the old Worcestershire hundred of Clent had long before disappeared, having lost the place which gave to it its name when Clent became part of Staffordshire, the parish was henceforth accounted portion of the hundred of Halfshire.

With Clent again part of Worcestershire, we may well leave the history of the parish. The doings of Clent people at the present time, and the changes which are passing over the village from day to day, may well form material for the historian of the future. It is sufficient for me if I have saved from forgetfulness some little of the earlier history of Clent.

APPENDIX A.

THE LEGEND OF ST. KENELM.

THROUGH the kindness of Mr. James Parker, who has collated the Chronicles and Manuscripts containing the history of St. Kenelm, and who has allowed me freely to make use of his notes, I am able to give the following Appendix.

The life of St. Kenelm is given in the following manuscripts :—

1. MS. Corpus Christi Coll. Camb., No. 367.
2. MS. Bodley, Douce, 368 [ff. 79-82b.].
3. MS. Bodley, No. 285 [ff. 80-83].
4. MS. Lansdowne, No. 436 [ff. 88-91].
5. MS. Coll. S. Johannis, Oxon, No. 149 [fol. 79b].
6. MS. Cottonian, Tiber E. VI. I. [fol. 299].
7. MS. Bodley, Tanner, No. 15.
8. MS. Harleian, No. 2277.

Of these No. 1 has not been seen ; it may be earlier than No. 2, but the first part of it is abridged. No. 2 was copied in the twelfth century at Winchcombe, a monastery founded by Kenulph, the father of Kenelm, and where father and son were buried. Owing to the direct association of Kenelm with the Abbey, it is probably as complete a copy as possible of the original legend, and may be taken as the typical story. No. 3 also belongs to the twelfth century, and corresponds very closely with No. 2, so much so that possibly it

was copied from the same original. No. 4 belongs to the thirteenth century, and provides nothing in addition to No. 2. No. 5 is a paper manuscript of the sixteenth century, and has not been examined. Nor has No. 6 been attempted; it has suffered much from fire, and though it has been repaired, it is scarcely legible, and the edges are gone; while No. 7 is a copy of Capgrave's *Nova Legenda Angliæ*. The English version No. 8 has been printed by Mr. W. J. Furnival, for the Philological Society, in 1862.

In the regular Chronicles, the story is shortly given by Florence of Worcester (*ob.* 1118); at fuller length by William of Malmesbury (*ob.* 1143), both in his *Gesta Regum* and his *Gesta Pontificum*; and by Matthew Paris, the monk at St. Alban's, who probably gives it as left by Roger of Wendover, about 1220. It is also to be found in Brompton's Chronicle, probably of the date 1400.

Comparing these Chronicles with the manuscripts mentioned above, there is evidence to shew that Florence of Worcester, writing before 1118, had some copy of the legend before him in such very similar language to the Winchcombe copy of the Douce manuscript as to warrant one in supposing it was practically the same version; and that for the purposes of his Chronicle he abridged it. The same reasoning applies to William of Malmesbury's summary (1120—1125). From numbers of his expressions it may be accepted that he used some early copy of the same version as the Winchcombe legend, and that he did not use Florence of Worcester's summary, but made one of his own. The variations he makes look as if he had tried to im-

prove the original by putting it into better Latin, rather than as if he were writing from a different copy.

The chronicler who wrote the St. Albans' version freely made use of William of Malmesbury's summary, which was here and there improved by the copyist, just as its author himself had improved upon the original. But in one or two minor instances there seems to be in these corrections a "harking-back" to the original legend, as if from time to time the scribe referred to a copy of the Winchcombe version, though he made use of Malmesbury's abstract, instead of making one for himself. But besides these minor additions, one important passage is introduced; the English words on the scroll are given, "In clenc cu beche Kenelm cune-bearn lith under thorne havedes bereafed." The copy of the legend to which the St. Alban's chronicler had access apparently contained the English as well as the Latin of the scroll. The Winchcombe copy has only the Latin; William of Malmesbury has neither. The St. Alban's chronicler would hardly invent these words. Their omission in the Winchcombe version may be owing to the carelessness of the scribe, who might consider them of no importance; though they are omitted also in manuscripts Nos. 3 and 4. Or they may have been taken from some other version than the Winchcombe one, of perhaps an earlier date; but of such version there is no further trace.

I think it will be advisable now to give the legend itself; and the following is an abbreviation of the story as it is given in the Douce Manuscript (No. 2), in which it purports to be derived from a certain monk of Worcester, by name Wlfwyn, a disciple of Oswald, Arch-

bishop of York (972—992) ; while it is said that so many English writings recorded it, and it was testified to by so many miracles, that "*rebellatrix obstinatio*" could not gainsay it.

When Kenulph died in 819 he left as his heir Kenelm his son, who had two sisters, Quendryda and Burgenhilda. Kenelm was endowed with every grace of body and mind, and, in right of his birth and by his father's will, was chosen by the people to be their king. But Quendryda, moved by a strong desire to reign herself, plotted against him, and since poison had no effect, bribed Askobert, his guardian, to kill him, by the offer of great rewards and the hope of sharing the throne with her. About this time Kenelm had a dream, which he told to his nurse Wlwene, who lived at Winchcombe. "I saw," he said, "O dearest mother, a tree that reached to the stars standing by my bed, and I stood on the top of it, whence I could see all things. It was most beautiful, having wide spreading branches ; and it was covered from top to bottom with all kinds of flowers and glowed with innumerable lights. But as I wondered at the sight, some of my people cut down the tree, and it fell with a great crash. And forthwith I made for myself white wings, and flew up to heaven." "Alas !" said the nurse as he spoke, "my sweetest son, whom I have nourished with my milk ! I fear that the falling tree means the destruction of your life, through the wicked plot of your sister and the treachery of your guardian. And by the bird which went up to heaven is meant the glory of the ascension of your soul." But the child had no fear ; and when at length Askobert,

seizing a chance of carrying out his crime, took him into a wood as if to hunt, the child followed like a lamb to the slaughter, to reach the crown of glory.

When they had come near to the wood, the tender child, being about seven years old, became very tired, and got down from his horse ; and as if secure from evil fell fast asleep, while his cruel guardian dug a grave in which he might quickly hide him. When he awoke, with prophetic mind he said, "It is in vain that you have dug for me this grave. I shall not rest here, but in a far distant place, which God has provided for me. And this shall be a sign ; for this stick (he carried a stick), when I plant it in the ground, shall burst into leaf." This did happen, and to this day a vast ash-tree is shewn which bears the memory of the holy Kenelm. But the cruel butcher slew him, and put him in the hole he had dug, where there is a deep valley hidden between two hills, in the wood called Clent. Here, under a thorn, Kenelm's head was cut off, after he had said in our Lord's words, "What thou doest do quickly ;" and straightway a white dove with golden wings flew up to the sky, as in the vision had been shewn. They say that as he was about to be beheaded he sang the hymn, "We praise Thee, O God ;" and when he had come to the words, "The white-robed army of martyrs," he fell slain.

Though the murderer thought he could hide his crime in that great wilderness, a shining column of light was often seen over Kenelm's body. Moreover a white cow, leaving the pastures on the hills, went and stayed by the place, and could not be taken from it. And as often as the herd grazed near the spot, they gave

a double supply of milk, so wholesome was the herbage there ; moreover what was eaten in the evening had grown more abundantly the next morning. So the place came to be called Cow-vale (*vaccæ vallis*).

Quendryda having obtained the kingdom at the price of her brother's blood, ordered that any one who should seek for him, or even name him, should be at once beheaded. But even dumb animals spoke, and the light that was quenched in England burned more brightly at Rome. For while Pope Leo junior was celebrating Mass before a great crowd of people, behold a dove whiter than snow appeared from above, bearing a snow-white scroll written upon in English with letters of gold, and placing it on the altar of St. Peter's, disappeared again into the height. The holy man beheld the unknown words with fear, and asked those around what it might mean. There happened to be some Englishmen there, and by them the letter was interpreted as follows :—

“In Clentho vaccæ valli Kenelmus regius natus,
Jacet sub spino, capite truncatus.”

So the Pope sent an embassy to Wilfred, the Archbishop of Canterbury (805—832), and the bishops of England, that Kenelm, the future martyr of God, might be taken from his unworthy hiding-place to the church at Winchcombe, built in honour of God ; and so it was done, to the joy of all the people of Mercia and of England ; and Kenelm reposed in the temple which his father had founded and endowed with kingly wealth. When the body was taken up, a sacred fountain burst out from the dry cave and flowed away in a stream,

which brought health to many who drank of it. And while he was being carried out of the wood, the way was stopped by a great multitude, and numbers of blind and deaf and halt were healed.

While the body was being borne along by the people of the province of Gloucester, an armed body of the people of the province of Worcester came up, and at the ford called Pyriford tried to stop the carrying away of the precious treasure. While the dispute was going on, it was agreed that the people who woke earliest at the dawn of the next day should have the body; and it happened that the men of Gloucester were the more wakeful, and had gone five miles before the Worcester men arose. Moved by anger, they followed with all the speed possible; and when the fugitives saw them close at hand, calling on Kenelm they rushed panting along a narrow path under some protecting foliage. They had come in sight of the abbey of Winchcombe, when, overpowered by thirst and labour, they sank breathless on the sacred turf, and forthwith a spring burst out from under a neighbouring stone, of which the assembly drank; and regaining strength, they went on their way. And the spring of water still flows down into the river.

Quendryda was standing in the upper part of the western end of St. Peter's Church, and when she saw the multitude running down the hill, she seized a Psalter and began to sing backwards the 108th Psalm^a, from the end to the beginning, so that it should be perverted from his good to his ill. But her malice was

^a Psalm cviii. of the Vulgate begins, "Deus laudem meum." The 20th verse runs, "Hoc opus eorum," etc.

turned against herself, for when she had reached from the end the verse, "Let this be the reward of my adversaries," her two eyes fell from their orbits on to the page she was reading. And the Psalter still exists, and is marked with the gore of the fallen orbs. A short time after this the wretched woman died, and they say that neither church, nor churchyard, nor field would hold her when buried, but by the order of a shining angel-child she was thrown into a deep, far-distant ditch.

Thus the Martyr Kenelm was borne to his father's monastery of Winchcombe. Here his sanctity was shewn by many miracles then and thereafter, down to the present time.

When Canute was king, a wealthy Dane, whose name was Osgot, strove to take possession of a piece of ground next to the land of the holy Kenelm, at New-enton, to join to his land at Rudinton. When the assembly had come together, Godwin, who was then Abbot, brought the holy Kenelm into the midst, and ordered the man, with twenty-four of his peers, to swear upon the body of the martyr. And as he advanced to take the oath, struck by the manifest power of God, he went backwards, and fell prone along the ground. So he was led home, and not long after died. And because he had unjustly endeavoured to seize a small possession, he lost all his property.

A certain well-known man, named Godric, swore by the holy Kenelm that he had never defrauded any one of a single farthing; and he suddenly became dumb, and by his silence betrayed his guilt.

At that time the Abbot had decreed that the feast

of Kenelm should be celebrated in Peyleton by the staying of all work. But the lady of the manor, hearing of it when she reclined at meat, ordered no work to be stopped. She said: "I don't know why we should lose a day's work for Kenelm." But no sooner had she spoken, than her eyes fell out upon the table. Moreover her oxen, which she had yoked to the wain, shook off the yoke and disappeared, and could no more be found.

It is widely known in Hereford that a hammer and a pincers stuck to the right and left hands of a smith who worked on the same day, and they could not be loosed even with wedges. But when he had called upon Kenelm, the hardened hands, with the nails forced into the flesh, were restored whole.

Again, on Kenelm's natal day, when the whole of England was celebrating his feast, a man born blind, by name Lifsi, asked grace of the martyr; he, falling into a trance, cried out, "O holy Kenelm, spare me! Why do you torment me?" Afterward he said that he saw a most glorious boy stand by him, carrying in his hands two glowing stars, which he placed on his eyes. At once his eyes were restored, and he wondered at the brightness of the day, and the size of the world. For this Abbot Godwin gave praise to God.

In the same way there came the Dog-keeper, who was the companion of the huntsmen belonging to Alfric, a great man who dwelt in the town at Stertel. In a trance he saw a glorious child coming to him with a burning coal, which he put on his mouth, and immediately he could speak. His master, who had known him from a child, said he had never before spoken, and

the dogs obeyed the sound of his lips, though it was not formed into words.

Another dumb man, who came to the steps of the presbytery as if out of his mind, and was being cast about hither and thither, miserably invoked Kenelm to pity him. And the return of his speech, in the presence of the aforesaid Abbot and the crowd of priests and people, caused all to praise God. And when he was questioned by the Abbot, he said that he felt and knew nothing, but that his speech returned.

A certain man came crawling on the ground, who had hollowed blocks of wood bound to his knees like shoes, and wooden greaves on his thighs, and he supported his hands with sticks, being more like a reptile than one who should be able to gaze up into heaven. He had bowed himself before Kenelm for a whole day, and giving up hope, prepared to go away, when a sudden miracle happened. His strings were broken, the wood-shells shaken off, and the man rose up erect, and all sang a hymn of praise to the Lord.

At another time, a certain Saxon, bound round his midst with iron, had for fifteen days anticipated Kenelm's natal feast, hoping for pardon, and as the day came near, was more instant in watching and prayer. As the feast day drew on to dark, giving up hope, he prepared to depart in the morning. But as he bewailed himself, forthwith the iron band was broken, and he fell down in grateful thanks.

In the next village of Southam, a father brought his son and laid him down before the altar of Kenelm. His heels were fixed to his thighs, and his hands were stuck to his sides, so that he could only move from his

place by being carried. But while the Abbot who succeeded Godric was beginning the evening hymn, the boy stood on his feet, and in the sight of all stretched out his hands in grateful praise.

In the past year it seemed good to the Abbot that the holy Kenelm should be borne to the place of his passion. While they were lodging in the vill of Wic, the son of Osbern, a well-known man, had the pupils of his eyes turned up under his eyebrows, and hidden like stars under a cloud. So he prayed to the holy Kenelm, and each of his eyes turned to its right direction, and he enjoyed the blessing of light.

On the same night, when all were overcome by sleep, a candle that burnt on the Altar opposite the saint fell from its candlestick, and burnt for a long time on the Altar coverings, as if it had been upon a dry stone. And when the monks arose, and rushed to repair their negligence, they found the ash of the candle a cubit in length, shewing where it had burnt. But when the ash was removed, they found that neither mark of burning nor spot of wax remained. Who could keep silence in view of such a mark of the favour of God to the blessed martyr?

When he had been brought to Clent, the place was celebrated by a third miracle, for a girl bowed to the ground stood erect by the grace of God.

A certain man was a cripple from his birth, so that his heels were pressed to his thighs, and his fingers were turned back and stuck to his arms. His brother had taken him to many churches, and with great labour had reached Rome. He was told in a dream to return to his country and go to Winchcombe, when his brother

would be healed by the blessed Kenelm. So he brought his brother and laid him before the altar. And the cripple in his sleep, as he afterwards said, saw a precious boy come down from the altar, with a golden rod in his hand, with which he touched him, and told him to rise. Then the man who had never moved except with the help of others, rose and stretched forth his hands, as if to embrace his saviour. But after he had touched him with the rod, the boy seemed quickly to re-ascend the altar, and to enter the shrine which held his holy bones. And the man remained here for many years, shewing the marks on his thighs where his heels had been fixed.

Since present miracles, as well as past, rejoice the lovers of truth, let this writing record what has recently happened. For the voice passes away, but writing illumines those that come after.

So in the year 1149, when the monastery and all the building had been burned and reduced to ashes, the neighbours took counsel with the bishops, the abbot, and other wise men, as to rebuilding it. And at length it seemed good to the prelate that two or three monks, with the body of the blessed Kenelm, should journey through the neighbouring provinces, carrying with them a letter from the Bishop of Worcester and others of the province, stating the need in which the church of the blessed martyr lay.

The journey of the monks being prepared, and the peregrination of Kenelm being begun, the most holy body received hospitality at Leicester. Here God worked a most wonderful miracle of healing, in answer to, the supplications of the infirm. Among them were

two youths who had come to extreme want, so the bystanders said, on account of their very great infirmity. But when they had tasted the holy water in which the relics of the saint had been dipped, they at once received help from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here the manuscript suddenly ends; though probably only the last leaf is wanting.

Coming now to the question when and where the original legend was compiled, it would appear that it was written before 1118, since Florence of Worcester seems to have seen it, with the object of glorifying St. Kenelm, and of embodying certain facts and traditions. It might not have been written at Winchcombe, for there is no record of any writer there at the time in question; but doubtless it was written for Winchcombe, since no other abbey then existing had any special interest in it. The abbey of Halesowen was not founded till 1215, though the chapel of St. Kenelm, on the traditional spot of the murder, shows a south door, decorated with bird-beak ornaments, as early as Henry II.'s reign, 1154 to 1189. The story may possibly belong to the series of lives compiled by Gotcelin, a monk of Canterbury, who visited several monasteries to obtain his material, and who died a little before 1100. The last miracle which is said to have occurred since the burning of the abbey in 1149, has clearly been added by a later hand, and the initials have never been illuminated; and since the last leaf or leaves of the manuscript are gone, it cannot be known how many more miracles were given. "The whole matter, however," says Mr. Parker, "I think points to

the original compilation having been made before 1100, at or for Winchcombe, and that it was much as we have it now. But the existing Winchcombe copy was made about 1150, the last miracle or two being added soon after."

There remains to consider how far the legend in its original shape fixed the martyrdom at Clent. Neither Florence of Worcester nor William of Malmesbury give any place as the scene of the murder, though the latter gives an account of the body being brought to Winchcombe.

"It appears to me," says Mr. Parker, "that Matthew Paris never took the second word of the English inscribed on the scroll (transcribed by Luard for the Rolls Series as *Clenc*, and not *Clent*) as the name of a place, for the passage goes on: 'Quod Latine sonat "in clenc cu beche," id est, in pastura vaccarum, Kenelmus, etc.' Further, he has apparently been puzzled with the word, since he has put at the bottom of the page, as if he had found a various reading, 'En clen under thorneat cu beche lith, etc.' This may be inferred from the reading 'clen' being given at the foot of the page, which would not have been done had he known Clent to be the name of the place.' The translator, it will be observed above, seems to ignore the 'clenc,' giving simply 'pastura vaccarum.'"

It must not be overlooked that in the Douce manuscript there are several mentions of Clent; and the locality is so exactly described by "a deep valley between two hills," that these might well be the words of one well acquainted with the physical characteristics of the place. At the top of this deep valley, but over

the ridge on the eastern slope, stands St. Kenelm's Chapel. The story of the dispute at Pyriford is very much in favour of the fact that the body was brought from the north southwards across Worcestershire. Pyriford as a name is lost, but there is not much doubt that it lay where Pershore Bridge now is, and where the road formerly crossed the Avon by a ford. The journey from Clent to Winchcombe would be nearly in a due south direction, and the Avon, the only important river on the way, would be crossed at a distance of $21\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Clent. Probably the procession stopped for the night at Pershore Abbey, $11\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Winchcombe, founded in the seventh century, and among whose charters is a grant from Kenulph, Kenelm's father. The monks of Worcester would have had to travel some 8 miles to cut the course of the funeral party nearly at right angles. It seems a very probable story. Finally, we are expressly told that when Kenelm was taken to the ancient place of his passion, during which journey several of the miracles occurred, Clent was the end of his journey. We are not told why the journey was undertaken. We might hazard a guess, that it had to do with either the establishment or the perpetuation of some memorial on the spot where the saint suffered; whether the present chapel marks the spot may be open to doubt, and this raises the question how far the legend follows facts, or how far imagination.

There are one or two minor difficulties in the story. One would have expected the scene of the martyrdom to be laid near Winchcombe. There is no record of kings residing near Clent, though a tradition exists at the place that Pen Orchard farm, close to the chapel,

occupies the site of a hunting-palace of the Mercian kings ; but this might just as well spring out of the legend, as the legend out of such a fact. And if a palace had existed in connection with the hunting woods, it is most probable that it was situated on lower ground. Still, if Clent were not the actual place of the murder, no reason for the choice of the spot as the scene of the legend is known or can be imagined. Again, there is a difficulty as to the Pope who received the message from the white dove. The Pope known as Pope Leo junior, was Leo IV., i.e., from 847 to 855, some years after the occurrence. Pope Leo III. ruled, 795 to 816.

Mr. Parker sums up the evidence thus : " There are several points which render it not improbable that the story had some facts on which it was based, and that actually bones, professing to be those of Kenelm son of Kenulf, were deposited at Winchcombe beside his father, and that these were taken from the neighbourhood of Clent."

I may fitly close this Appendix with a Latin Hymn in praise of St. Kenelm, from the Bodleian MS. No. 285, No. 3 of the former list :—

" O Kenelme, martyr alme, Merciorum gloria,
Rex sublimis, tua nimis dulcis est memoria !
Nam precellis favo mellis gratia dulcedinis,
Atque rosis speciosis flore pulchritudinis.
Martyr ave ! qui per grave juguli supplicium,
Deo pacis de te facis gratum sacrificium ;
Martyr, inquam, qui longinquam pacis petens patriam,
Hujus vitæ sine lite linquis ydolatriam ;
Martyr clare, deprecare illam tuam Dominam,
Illam dignam et benignam et jocundam Feminam ;

Illam dico quæ pudico ventre Deum genuit,
Et naturæ victo jure castitatem tenuit ;
Hanc, insignis martyr, dignis deprecare precibus,
Et tuorum meritorum interpella vocibus,
Ut dignetur quod meretur culpas nostras pellere,
Et precare nos ditare charitatis munere,
Ubi gratis cum beatis nos contingat sociis
Eternorum canticorum perfrui negociis."

APPENDIX B.

A LIST of the Rectors and Vicars of Clent mentioned in the text, with an account of the Church Plate now in existence.

RECTORS.

Master Herbert, 1199.	John de Honnesworth, 1317.
John Waleraund, 1251.	John de Horseley, 1326.
Simon de Somery, 1274.	Nicholas Jobbinol, 1339.
Hugh Hamelin, 1282.	William de Northwell, 1344.
Gilbert de Chaucombe, 1285.	John de Northwell, 1349.

VICARS.

John Andrew, 1345.	John Hay, 1468.
John Buggyng, 1349.	John Seed, 1485.
John Carlas, 1379.	John Hay, 1489.
Robert Atherstone, 1392.	William Hampton, 1502.
Thomas Paas, 1400.	Thomas Gaunt, 1549.
Thomas Lenyot, 1415.	Roger Chaunce, 1556.
Henry Broke, 1420.	Adam Javon, 1557.
John Duffield, 1423.	Roger Ravenscroft, 1597.
Richard Hull, 1455.	Charles Dudson, 1598.

O

Robert Cleye, 1600.	Edward Sheward, 1719.
Thomas Broade, 1610.	John Perry, 1737.
William Sherborne, 1612.	Littleton Perry, 1780.
John Wood, 1626.	Joseph Sharpe, 1817.
Andrew Tristram, 1649.	Adolphus Hopkins, 1825.
Thomas Baldwin, 1657.	Samuel Oxley, 1855.
Walter Wheeler, 1662.	George Halls, 1860.
— Cole, ?.	Frederick Robert Lawson,
Thomas Walker, 1668.	1886.

CHURCH PLATE.

THE plate now used in the church consists of a Cup and salver Paten. This last is inscribed, "Donum Mariae Amphlett ecclesiae Clent 1750." The Cup is not inscribed, but from its date is supposed to be the gift of the same donor. The Flagon is of plated ware.

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